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ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA

REPORT ON THE TWENTY-SECOND SESSION
14-17 April 2003

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NOTE

Symbols of United Nations documents are composed of capital letters combined with figures. Mention of such a symbol indicates a reference to a United Nations document.

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INTRODUCTION

1. The twenty-second session of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) was held pursuant to its resolution 196 (XVII) of 31 May 1994 on the frequency of sessions of the Commission.

2. This report covers the work of the Commission at its twenty-second session, held at United Nations House in Beirut from 14 to 17 April 2003.

3. The report focuses on the most important points raised in the discussions that took place on each agenda item. The Commission adopted the report unanimously at the final meeting of the session, held on 17 April 2003.

I. ISSUES CALLING FOR ACTION BY THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

4. At its sixth plenary meeting, held on 17 April 2003, the Commission adopted two resolutions and decided to submit them to the Economic and Social Council for action. The texts of those resolutions are set forth below:

239 (XXII). CONSIDERATION OF THE ESTABLISHMENT WITHIN THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA OF A UNITED NATIONS ARABIC LANGUAGE CENTRE

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,

Referring to General Assembly resolution 54/248 dated 23 December 1999 concerning the pattern of conferences,

Referring also to the requests and suggestions put forward to the Secretariat by the delegations of Arab States Members of the United Nations concerning Arabic language services and, in particular, to the proposal of the delegation of Egypt that is set forth in annex II of the *Report of the Committee on Conferences to the General Assembly* at its forty-ninth session[1] and the letter dated 31 July 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, written in his capacity as Chairman of the Arab Group for the month of July 2001, concerning multilingualism,[2]

Recognizing the importance of the coordinating role that could be played by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), given that it is located in the Arab region, with respect to strengthening Arabic language services in the United Nations system in close cooperation with United Nations Headquarters Arabic Translation and Editorial Services and benefiting from the high level of expertise in the region,

1. *Calls upon* the secretariat to consider the establishment of a United Nations Arabic language centre, based at ESCWA, of which the objective, in cooperation with the Secretariat of the United Nations, and taking into consideration the requisite technical, financial and administrative needs, shall be to raise the technical and linguistic level of the Arabic terminology used in United Nations documents, in order to facilitate the use of the Arabic Language in such documents;

2. *Also calls upon* the secretariat, in cooperation with the Secretariat of the United Nations, to undertake the establishment of a committee responsible for determining the competences of the aforementioned centre;

3. *Requests* the Executive Secretary to follow up implementation of this resolution and to submit a report on the progress achieved in that regard to the Commission at its twenty-third session.

6th plenary meeting
17 April 2003

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[1] See A/49/32/Rev.1.

[2] See A/56/261.

240 (XXII). THE ESTABLISHMENT WITHIN THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA OF A COMMITTEE ON WOMEN

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,

Aware of the importance of action relating to the empowerment of women and the improvement of their status, and of making available equal opportunities for their empowerment and increased participation at all levels of the development process,

Aware also of the importance of coordination with regard to the empowerment of women and of respect for the particularities, customs and culture of each Arab country when harmonizing Arab positions at global conferences and following up the global conferences organized by the United Nations with a view to incorporating the regional dimension in international instruments,

Affirming the importance of the involvement of the interested parties in ESCWA member countries in the planning, development and follow-up to implementation of secretariat programmes relating to the empowerment of women and of mainstreaming the gender perspective in activities and policies,

Guided by the action taken by the other United Nations regional Commissions that have established special committees on women,

Taking into consideration the recommendation made by the Committee on Social Development[3] at its fourth session, held in Beirut from 3 to 5 July 2002, concerning the establishment within ESCWA of a committee on women,

1. *Decides* to establish within ESCWA a committee on women comprising representatives of member countries who are specialists in women's issues, to be responsible for the following:

(a) To identify the women-related priorities of the ESCWA programmes of work and medium-term plans;

(b) To monitor developments with respect to the status of women and evaluate indicators and statistics with a view to formulating an integrated policy for the advancement and empowerment of women;

(c) To monitor the progress made in ESCWA secretariat women-related activities;

(d) To follow up global and regional conferences and the participation of member countries therein and coordinate the endeavours of member countries with regard to implementation of the resolutions and recommendations adopted at such conferences;

(e) To coordinate action at regional level towards the adoption of unified positions on the issue at international gatherings and in follow-up to the performance by member countries of the undertakings to which they made a commitment by becoming parties to women-related human rights instruments;

(f) To prepare and implement field projects for the advancement and empowerment of women in ESCWA member countries and find the necessary funding for such projects;

(g) To accord the requisite importance to women in the region, in which wars and conflicts are prevalent and, in particular, to Palestinian women, who are suffering in the conditions in which the Palestinian people is living under continuing Israeli occupation;

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[3] See *Report on the Fourth Session of the Committee on Social Development* (E/ESCWA/SD/2002/IG.1/9).

2. *Decides also* that the committee on women shall hold its sessions biennially, with effect from 2004, and that an inaugural session should be held before the end of 2003;

3. *Requests* the Executive Secretary to establish a centre for women's issues within the secretariat with the responsibility for acting as the secretariat of the Committee on Women;

4. *Further requests* the Executive Secretary to follow up implementation of this resolution and to submit a report on the matter to the Commission at its twenty-third session.

6th plenary meeting
17 April 2003

II. TWENTY-SECOND SESSION OF THE COMMISSION

A. ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

5. The twenty-second session of the Commission was held in Beirut from 14 to 17 April 2003. The Commission, which held six meetings during the session, discussed the items on the agenda contained in paragraph 12 of this report and submitted the resolutions that it had adopted to the Economic and Social Council for action.

6. The session was attended by the following members of the Commission:[4] Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

7. Three States Members of the United Nations that are not members of the Commission participated as observers in the work of the twenty-second session, namely, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Morocco and the Sudan.

8. In addition, representatives of the following United Nations entities attended as observers: the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General for Southern Lebanon; the New York Office of the Regional Commissions; the Office of Legal Affairs, United Nations Headquarters, New York; United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); International Labour Organization (ILO); Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO); United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO); United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA); United Nations Environment Programme; the United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS); and the Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention.

9. Representatives of the following intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) also attended the session as observers: Arab Organization for Agricultural Development; Arab Planning Institute; International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas; Arab Industrial Development and Mining Organization; the Arab Society for Sociology; Birzeit University; the Child and Mother Society; the General Union of Palestinian Women; the Council of Ministers of Labour and Social Affairs in Gulf Cooperation Council States; the General Union of Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture for Arab Countries; the Hariri Foundation; the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World; the Imam Al-Sadr Foundation; the Kuwaiti Union for Women Associations; League of Arab States; the Lebanese Association for Popular Volunteer Groups; the Lebanese National Commission for Education, Science and Culture for UNESCO; the Lebanese Researchers Association; the Lebanese Welfare Association for the Handicapped; the Lebanese Women Council; the National Center for Development and Rehabilitation; Organization of the Islamic Conference; the National Committee on Lebanese Women's Affairs; the Saudi Fund for Development; the Union of Arab Banks; the Union of Jordanian Associations; and the Union of Northern Associations for Sustainable Development.

1. *Election of officers*

10. Rule 12 of the Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of the Commission provides that member countries shall assume the chairmanship of the sessions of the Commission on a rotating basis, in the Arabic alphabetical order employed by the United Nations. Accordingly, at its first meeting, held on 14 April 2003, His Excellency Mr. Mohammad Zeki Abou Amer, head of the delegation of Egypt, was elected as Chairman of the twenty-second session. Rule 12 further provides that the Commission shall, at the commencement of each session, elect from among the representatives of its members, two Vice-Chairmen and a Rapporteur, who shall be eligible for re-election. Accordingly, His Excellency Mr. Abdullah Mohammad Al-Khater,

[4] For the names of participants, see annex I.

head of the delegation of Qatar, and His Excellency Mr. Makram Ebeid, head of the delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic, were elected as Vice-Chairmen; and His Excellency Mr. Mitri Tanas Abu Aita, head of the delegation of Palestine, was elected as Rapporteur.

2. *Credentials*

11. In accordance with rule 11 of Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of the Commission, the credentials of the representatives as submitted to the Executive Secretary were examined by the officers and found to be in order.

3. *Agenda and organization of work*

12. At its first meeting the Commission adopted the agenda and organization of work of the session as set forth in documents E/ESCWA/22/1 and E/ESCWA/22/2 respectively.[5] The agenda adopted was as follows:

"1. Opening of the twenty-second session.

2. Election of officers.

3. Adoption of the agenda.

4. Proposed organization of work.

5. Invitation to States Members of the United Nations and/or of the specialized agencies not members of the Commission to participate in the capacity of observer in the twenty-second session of the Commission.

6. Report of the Executive Secretary on the activities of the Commission.

7. General debate: summary of the issues of which the twenty-second session is seized.

8. Adoption of the Agreement on International Railways in the Arab Mashreq.

9. Issues of importance for the future of the ESCWA region:

   (a) The impact of the lack of stability in the Western Asia region on economic and social development;

   (b) The strengthening of Arab regional cooperation.

10. Draft programme of work and priorities for the biennium 2004-2005.

11. The role of ESCWA in coordinating regional activities of the United Nations system.

12. Designating the sessions of the Commission as the forum for a biennial pledging conference: resolution 236 (XXI).

13. Time and venue of the twenty-third session of the Commission.

14. Other business.

15. Adoption of the report of the Commission on its twenty-second session."

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[5] Annex II includes the list of documents.

B. OPENING OF THE SESSION

13. The opening meeting of the session was held under the patronage of the President of Lebanon, General Emile Lahoud. An inaugural statement was made by His Excellency Mr. Mahmoud Hammoud, Minister of Foreign and Emigrants Affairs, in his capacity as Chairman of the twenty-first session. He commended the especial interest demonstrated by the President in the role of the United Nations in general and of ESCWA, which Lebanon is proud to host in its capital, in particular. He focused on the current situation in the region and in Iraq, a member country, and on the suffering to which the Iraqi people is being subjected. He stressed the need to demand that the occupying forces assume their responsibilities towards the Iraqi people in accordance with the Geneva Conventions. Such a demand did not imply any recognition of the occupation.

14. Mr. Hammoud also affirmed in his statement that regional integration is more necessary now than ever before. Such integration is embodied in the cooperation of the countries of the region through the international organizations, of which Lebanon considers ESCWA one of the most important.

15. He said that globalization would not wait for the weak societies of the region, but would destroy them if they were not properly prepared from the economic and social points of view. Those countries that were pioneering globalization must establish genuine cooperation and encourage effective dialogue between North and South, in order to prepare a healthy environment for international cooperation.

16. He called for the establishment of dialogue on finding means of cooperation that would lead to a better world in which the identities and particularities of peoples and societies were preserved, rather than being faced with the threat of being engulfed.

17. The Executive Secretary of ESCWA read out a message from the United Nations Secretary-General to the twenty-second session. In that message, the Secretary-General said that the session was taking place against a backdrop of turmoil and uncertainty. The consequences of war and civil strife had diverted the resources and energies of many ESCWA members away from their development objectives.

18. The Secretary-General hoped that the session would discuss ways to explore the root causes of conflict, because that was the only way to build the foundations of enduring peace. The roots of conflict often lay in questions of governance, inequitable socio-economic development and uneven distribution of resources.

19. It was in relation to those matters that the role of the United Nations, including that of ESCWA, could be especially valuable.

20. He also made reference to the fact that the session would include a very important pledging conference, the first of its kind. Without the necessary additional resources, efforts to deal with development issues and, in particular, those associated with lack of stability, would be severely constrained.

21. He conveyed to participants his best wishes for a constructive session and expressed the hope that peace would prevail throughout the ESCWA region.

22. Ms. Mervat Tallawy, the Executive Secretary of ESCWA, then delivered her own statement, in which she expressed her deep gratitude to His Excellency General Emile Lahoud, President of Lebanon, for honouring ESCWA with his presence at the opening of the session. His presence was a sign of his belief in the importance of commitment to international legitimacy and in the role of the United Nations and of ESCWA.

23. She referred to the difficult circumstances through which the region was passing and to the losses to Iraq and the whole region that were likely to ensue from the war against Iraq, which were expected to

amount to US$ 1,000 billion over the forthcoming decade, as a result of the decline in growth levels and the accumulation of losses in growth in years to come.

24. Concurrently with those difficult circumstances, the region was facing international changes and challenges, including economic globalization and the technological revolution, which affected the social situation.

25. The Executive Secretary reviewed the fields in which ESCWA operated and through which it aimed to achieve regional integration. Its activities focused on a limited number of priorities, namely, water, globalization, social policies and technology.

26. She noted that ESCWA had added to its programme of work activities that were concerned with post-war reconstruction and rehabilitation, including those being undertaken, in a very modest fashion, in southern Lebanon. Steps had been taken pursuant to the resolution adopted at the twenty-first session concerning the rehabilitation of economic sectors in Palestine.

27. Among the action taken by ESCWA in order to promote regional integration in the region was the development of the Integrated Transport System in the Arab Mashreq. At the twenty-first session, the Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq had been adopted; during the twenty-second session, the Agreement on International Railways in the Arab Mashreq would be adopted.

28. In conclusion, the Executive Secretary saluted those who were calling for peace, who embodied the determination of the international community to adhere to international rules and laws and the principles of the United Nations. She also saluted the peoples of the region, who had endured difficulties for the past 50 years and remained steadfast in the hope of a better future.

C. MAIN TOPICS OF DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

1. *Invitation to States Members of the United Nations and/or of the specialized agencies not members of the Commission to participate in the capacity of observer in the twenty-second session of the Commission*
(Agenda item 5)

29. Three requests to participate in the capacity of observer in the twenty-second session were received, namely, from the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Morocco and the Sudan, as was indicated in paragraph 7 of this report.

2. *Report of the Executive Secretary on the activities of the Commission*
(Agenda item 6)

30. Under this item, the Executive Secretary presented the seven-part document E/ESCWA/22/4.

(a) *The role of ESCWA in supporting the mandate of the United Nations*

31. The representative of the secretariat introduced this item, which is covered in E/ESCWA/22/4(Part I). He briefly reviewed the activities undertaken by ESCWA in addition to its programme of work. Such activities were intended to establish communication between the Commission and the various sectors of society and took the form of providing representation for the Secretary-General at international gatherings; paying official visits to member countries with a view to getting first-hand information on the needs of those countries and acquainting them with ESCWA activities; and, finally, undertaking such media activities as the establishment of a web site in English and Arabic and permanent and temporary web pages; the publication of pamphlets and other issuances; the preparation of documentary films; and involvement in television programmes.

(b) *Progress made during 2002 in the implementation of the programme of work for the biennium 2002-2003*

32. The representative of the secretariat introduced this item, which is covered in E/ESCWA/22/4 (Part II), entitled *Regular programme activities*; E/ESCWA/22/4(Part II)/Add.1, entitled *Coordination and cooperation between ESCWA and United Nations agencies, international organizations and civil society institutions*; and E/ESCWA/22/4(Part II)/Add.2, entitled *Technical cooperation activities*. He reviewed the achievements realized by ESCWA over the past two years and summarized the most important areas in which ESCWA undertakes activities related to the following: the activation of regional integration; preparation at regional level for international conferences and follow-up thereto; consultancy and technical cooperation services; and, finally, some of the model projects that it has undertaken in the countries of the region.

33. A detailed review was then presented by the chiefs of the ESCWA technical divisions of the most significant accomplishments of the past two years in the following activities: the servicing of intergovernmental and global meetings; the convening of meetings, conferences and workshops; the publication of studies and reports; the implementation of field projects; and the provision of consultancy services and technical assistance.

(c) *Follow-up to implementation of the resolutions adopted by the Commission at its twenty-first session*

(i) *The establishment of an ESCWA consultative committee on scientific and technological development and technological innovation: resolution 225 (XXI)*

34. The representative of the secretariat introduced this item, which is covered in E/ESCWA/22/4 (Part III)/Add.1, and summarized the activities that ESCWA had undertaken pursuant to that resolution. He noted that the first meeting of the Committee had been held in cooperation with ILO. It issued recommendations relating to the importance of disseminating new technology and of formulating a new and comprehensive vision of technological development in the Arab world; and the adoption of an initiative for using technology to alleviate poverty and unemployment.

35. In addition, ESCWA was preparing a set of studies on improving the use of modern techniques. One such study was on forms of electronic learning.

36. The activities undertaken by ESCWA in this field have focused on three main areas, namely, the provision of training packs and illiteracy eradication programmes, with a view to enabling youth to enter the labour market; providing small and medium-size enterprises with input that will permit them to be competitive and grow; and strengthening research and development in the field of technology.

37. Other activities include the preparation of a study on the use of new technologies to treat water; the establishment of a regional network of technology parks and of an Internet portal that includes institutions working in the field of technology; and the formulation of indicators for evaluating the level of technology in Arab countries.

(ii) *Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003: resolution 232 (XXI)*

38. The representative of the secretariat introduced this item, which is covered in E/ESCWA/22/4 (Part III)/Add.2, and explained that the secretariat had added a number of activities to its programme of work for the biennium 2002-2003, in order to keep abreast of developments and make available extrabudgetary resources.

39. The activities were set forth in the annex to E/ESCWA/22/4(Part II). The session was required to consider and adopt those additional activities.

(iii) *The strengthening of cooperation between member countries in the field of shared water resources: resolution 233 (XXI)*

40. The representative of the secretariat introduced this item, which is covered in E/ESCWA/22/4 (Part III)/Add.3, and reviewed the main activities undertaken by ESCWA in the fields of water and energy pursuant to the aforementioned resolution. He also made a visual presentation in which he referred to the establishment of a task force on the optimum use of water resources in the countries of Western Asia; the creation of working groups and bilateral cooperation projects in member countries relating to specific shared water resources; and the conducting of studies and training activities for the building of national capacities and in order to strengthen cooperation between member countries and harmonize working methods in the management of water resources.

(iv) *Rationalization and increased efficiency of energy and the use of renewable sources of energy: resolution 234 (XXI)*

41. The representative of the secretariat introduced this item, which is covered in E/ESCWA/22/4 (Part III)/Add.4, explaining that a number of countries had taken a set of measures with respect to energy-related policies and projects that were intended to increase the efficiency of the production and consumption of energy and develop the uses of renewable energy. He noted that ESCWA had undertaken many activities aimed at providing member countries with the necessary technical information, studying the technical possibilities and options available and evaluating the practical priorities. It had also provided member countries with consultancy services and held several meetings of experts in the fields referred to.

42. Against this background, one of the delegations made a number of remarks on the issue of energy, covering the need to devote the requisite attention to dealing with traditional fuels, including the development and use of cleaner new techniques; the need to study sources of energy that were plentiful in the ESCWA member countries and, in particular, oil and gas, because of the importance of their role in achieving sustainable development; the need to focus on activities relating to the energy sector and its role in sustainable development; the non-observance of obligations specified in international agreements that were not approved by the developing countries, including, for example, the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions; and the recommendation to change the name of the regional renewable energy mechanism to "the regional energy mechanism for sustainable development".

(v) *Adoption of the Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq: resolution 235 (XXI)*

43. The representative of the secretariat introduced this item, which is covered in E/ESCWA/22/4 (Part III)/Add.5, briefly reviewing the stages through which the Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq had passed. He noted that 11 ESCWA member countries had signed the Agreement; four had ratified it and three had deposited instruments of ratification with the Secretary-General. He added that the Committee on Transport had adopted a design for signs on the international roads in the Arab Mashreq, and ESCWA was currently completing the development of the Integrated Transport System in the Arab Mashreq.

44. With respect to the location in which those countries that had not yet done so could become signatories to the Agreement, and the method of acceding thereto, the representative of the secretariat explained that any country wishing to accede to the Agreement must submit a request to that effect to the Secretary-General. It was possible to accede to the Agreement without having signed it.

(vi) *Rehabilitation of economic sectors in Palestine: resolution 237 (XXI)*

45. The representative of the secretariat introduced this item, which is covered in E/ESCWA/22/4 (Part III)/Add.6, briefly reviewing the progress made in implementing that resolution. He noted that ESCWA had planned a number of activities, including the organization of an Arab international seminar on

socio-economic rehabilitation and development in the occupied Palestinian territories and the organization of missions to those territories, with a view to providing the Palestinian representatives with an opportunity to address the international community on the issue of socio-economic rehabilitation.

46. He added that those missions were intended to establish communication with the various relevant Palestinian parties, including civil society institutions, and to evaluate the capacities of the Palestinian Authority.

47. He explained that such missions had been postponed at the request of the Palestinian Authority because of the situation prevailing in the region and the war against Iraq.

48. He noted that it had been decided to hold a consultative meeting for all the relevant parties before the seminar.

(d) *Follow-up action at regional level to United Nations international conferences*

49. The representative of the secretariat introduced this item, which is covered in E/ESCWA/22/4 (Part IV). He briefly reviewed the activities that ESCWA has undertaken in order to prepare for and follow up United Nations global conferences. He said that ESCWA had participated in the follow-up to 10 conferences in various fields that addressed all aspects of social development, finance for development, sustainable development and information technology. Activities undertaken by ESCWA in that field included the preparation of brief background papers on the most important issues; the preparation of papers in Arabic because information was sometimes hard to come by in that language; the holding of preparatory conferences for the official and non-official parties; and the building of capacities for negotiation, position coordination, the formulation of specific positions and declaration of principles for submission to global conferences. The Commission had contributed to the preparations for three conferences in which it had participated actively, namely, the International Conference on Financing for Development, the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the World Summit on the Information Society.

(e) *Reports of the sessions of Commission subcommittees*

50. The representative of the secretariat introduced this item, which is covered in E/ESCWA/22/4 (Part V). He briefly reviewed the reports submitted by the Commission subcommittees. He noted that there were six such intergovernmental subcommittees that met once every two years, with the exception of the Committee on Transport, which met on an annual basis in order to follow up the implementational stages of the Integrated Transport System in the Arab Mashreq. The Committee on the Liberalization of Foreign Trade and Economic Globalization in the Countries of the ESCWA Region had also recommended that it should hold its meetings on an annual rather than a biennial basis. However, resolution 219 (XX) dated 27 May 1999 had provided that the session of that subcommittee should be held biennially.

51. The representative presented a visual review of the recommendations that had appeared in those reports.

(f) *Restructuring of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia*

52. The representative of the secretariat introduced this item, which is covered in E/ESCWA/22/4 (Part VI). He reviewed the details of the restructuring of the ESCWA secretariat, which involved three aspects, namely, those of programming, organization and human and financial resources.

53. With regard to programming, the secretariat referred to the amendments made to the medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005 and the programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003 with a view to being consistent with the four priorities identified by ESCWA for its work, namely, water and energy, integrated social policies, globalization and technology.

54. With respect to organization, he added that the programme amendments had been adopted by the Commission at its fourth special session, in March 2002 and by the relevant authorities at United Nations headquarters in New York. As for human resources, the representative of the secretariat said that a survey had been conducted with a view to establishing the skills of its staff members, in order to reposition them in the best interests of the priorities of the programme of work.

(g) *Financial status of the Commission's programmes*

55. The representative of the secretariat introduced this item, which is covered in E/ESCWA/22/4 (Part VII)/Rev.1. He made a visual presentation that included detailed information on the financial status of the Commission.

56. During discussion of the programme budget, a number of points were raised, including the following: the deficit in the ESCWA regular budget and the surplus of allocations for technical cooperation, and ways of dealing with that deficit; the issue of the distribution of expenses by activity; the rectification of information relating to the contribution of Kuwait; the reasons for the low proportion of extrabudgetary resources at ESCWA in comparison with the other regional commissions; the need for details of the allocations process and how it could be evaluated; and the low number of nationals of Gulf Cooperation Council States among the staff at ESCWA.

57. The representative of the secretariat said that the contributions of Kuwait and Lebanon had, in consultation with both countries, been credited to the ESCWA Development Trust Fund after the operation to relocate ESCWA headquarters to Beirut had been concluded. The new method of preparing the budget on the basis of outputs was not so much a financial tool as a mechanism for monitoring programme implementation. The outcomes of those practices would appear in the context of the programme of work for the biennium 2004-2005.

3. *General debate: summary of the issues of which the twenty-second session is seized*
(Agenda item 7)

58. A general debate was held on all the issues of which the Commission was seized at its twenty-second session. This agenda item was included in order to promote dialogue between the countries of the region and the Commission, with a view to taking into consideration the requests and comments of member countries concerning the ESCWA programme of work. During that debate, the following points were raised:

(a) Delegations commended the efforts exerted by ESCWA in many fields over the past two years and, in particular, in the preparations for the Fourth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO), which was held in Doha from 9 to 14 November 2001; the preparation of Arabic language documents and studies for a range of global conferences; the presence at its conferences of a number of eminent personalities, including Mr. Ahmed Zeweil, winner of the 1999 Nobel prize for Chemistry; the according of priority to information and communication technologies; the cooperation with a number of organizations and voluntary groups, especially in the field of women; and the ESCWA initiative involving the appointment of coordinating parties in member countries, because of its positive impact on effective coordination. Further commendation was made of the fields of activity selected by ESCWA for this stage, which meet the needs and requests of the region, and of the Commission's efforts to disseminate the majority of its issuances in the Arabic language;

(b) The strategic partnership between UNFPA and ESCWA in the fields of social policy in general and population research policies in particular; and the cooperation between ESCWA and UNCHR aimed at incorporating human rights measures into all the Commission's activities, as a result of which UNCHR representatives have been appointed in the Arab region;

(c) The need to strengthen the field projects undertaken by ESCWA and to coordinate efforts to make more widely available the benefits of the outcomes of those projects, particularly in dealing with the

problems of unemployment, poverty and social marginalization, given that those problems seriously compound threats to stability and security;

(d) The need for ESCWA to pay greater attention to publicizing its programmes and activities in the fields of economic and social development, and to continue its efforts to raise awareness in Arab countries of new developments relating to the WTO Agreements;

(e) The need to evaluate the outcome of ESCWA activities by adopting an indicator on expenditure/return or outcome and by seeking the views of those who benefit from such activities; and to urge Governments to provide information on the value of those activities, in order to enable ESCWA to develop them and make their benefits more widely available;

(f) The Commission should be urged to focus its concern on the social, economic and political challenges that have arisen as a consequence of the war against Iraq, and on the necessary studies on crisis economies and reports that help to deal with future changes;

(g) The need to overcome the obstacles that hinder implementation of resolution 237 (XXI) concerning rehabilitation of economic sectors in Palestine and the holding of the intended meeting for the assistance of Palestine, given that the substantial losses sustained by all sectors of the Palestinian economy underline the urgent need for direct support for the Palestinian economy;

(h) The question of the liberalization of services should be given the attention it merits, as should the status of the production and commodities sectors;

(i) The importance was stressed of information technology and vital technology;

(j) Reference was made to the importance of research on issues concerning the WTO Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights Agreement (TRIPs), with especial reference to food and medicines, and the related impact on developing countries, including the resulting rise in prices of those two types of commodity that will increase the burden on such countries;

(k) Reference was made to the possibility of a conflict between the respective remits of the committee on women which the secretariat wishes to establish and the Arab Women's Organization;

(l) The need for the secretariat to address issues relating to the population boom and its impact on development, widespread youth unemployment, the spread of diseases, medicines and HIV/AIDS;

(m) The importance was stressed of the provision of information and statistics that support the countries of the region and enable them to take positions and adopt sound policies, thereby avoiding being subject to the wishes of the developed countries and multinational corporations. This means that intensive and concentrated work must be undertaken with a view to materializing the particularities of the Arab countries and dividing roles between them. National statistical authorities will also have to be strengthened and classifications and measures standardized in order to give the statistics credibility and remove any doubt that may be attached thereto.

59. The secretariat response to those remarks was as follows:

(a) A focus on field projects alone could lead to the duplication of work done by other specialist organizations or to a conflict of competences. The concern of ESCWA in the fields of both research and field activities is with issues of productive use, social cohesion and the eradication of poverty on a wide scale. It also provides consultancy services that fulfil many of the needs and requirements of the countries of the region;

(b) Although a late entrant in this field, ESCWA has been involved in publicizing the WTO Agreements by translating into Arabic some of the documents relating to the subject. It is prepared to exert further efforts in order to assist the Arab countries and prepare them to participate effectively at the Fifth WTO Ministerial Conference, which will be held in Mexico in September 2003;

(c) The secretariat agreed as to the need to follow up the effects on the region of wars and conflicts and to take thought for the future; however, the secretariat must be given a mandate to that effect;

(d) The secretariat requested all the participants to become involved in publicizing ESCWA activities and providing the necessary political and financial support to enable the Commission to serve member countries;

(e) The secretariat noted that the events with which the region is confronted will, on many occasions, require that amendments are made to the programme of work and, consequently, that additional activities are undertaken and financed by extrabudgetary resources;

(f) The work of the United Nations, including that of ESCWA, in the field of women does not conflict with the remit of the other regional organizations: the situation is similar in all the fields with which it is concerned;

(g) The Commission has been tirelessly involved in the preparations for the global conferences concerning women since the First World Conference on Women was held in Mexico in 1975, up to and including the Fourth World Conference that was held in Beijing in 1995;

(h) The secretariat urged member countries to make use of their regional competencies and particularities and noted some important dimensions thereof;

(i) The secretariat stressed the importance of member countries' delegating high-level participants to its meetings.

4. *Adoption of the Agreement on International Railways in the Arab Mashreq*
(Agenda item 8)

60. The representative of the secretariat introduced this item, which is covered in E/ESCWA/22/5. He detailed the six stages through which the draft agreement on international railways in the Arab Mashreq passed. The first was in 1998, while the last concluded with the preparation of the final document of the agreement (E/ESCWA/TRANS/2002/1/Rev.2). The aims of the agreement are to identify axes for the rail network that will link the regions of the Arab Mashreq, strengthen trade and tourism and standardize the technical specifications for railways in the region. The benefits of the agreement include the establishment of one of the cheapest and most efficient methods of transport; the reduction of costs, including those to the environment; the facilitation of multimodal transport; and the strengthening of links between ESCWA member countries and the outside world. The representative of the secretariat gave some details about the rail axes, including their length and current status and noted that 41 per cent of the axes already existed. He concluded his intervention by urging the session to adopt the agreement.

61. During the discussion, the following points were raised:

(a) There is conformity between this agreement and the efforts being exerted in this regard by the League of Arab States, which deals with the entire Arab network in the Mashreq and the Maghreb. In view of the importance of railway lines, it is expected that ESCWA will follow up implementation of this agreement and provide assistance to member countries;

(b) Commendation was made of the role played by ESCWA in preparing the agreement, which is the fruit of regional endeavours in this field.

62. The Agreement on International Railways in the Arab Mashreq was adopted on 14 April 2003, and the representative of the Office of Legal Affairs in New York was urged to open the Agreement for signature on the same day. It was open for signature in Beirut from 14 to 17 April and will remain open in New York until 31 December 2004.

63. In alphabetical order, the delegates who signed the Agreement were as follows: His Excellency Sheikh Mohammed bin Khalifa bin Ali Al Khalifa, Deputy Minister of Communications of Bahrain; His Excellency Mr. Mohammed Zeki Abou Amer, Minister of State for Administrative Development of Egypt; His Excellency Mr. Anmar Hmoud, the Ambassador of Jordan to Lebanon; His Excellency Mr. Najib Mikati, Minister of Public Works and Transport of Lebanon; His Excellency Mr. Mitri Abu Aita, Minister of Transport and Communications of Palestine; His Excellency Mr. Makram Ebeid, Minister of Transport of the Syrian Arab Republic; His Excellency Sheikh Humaid bin Ahmad Al-Mualla, Minister of Planning of the United Arab Emirates; and His Excellency Mr. Abdul Rahman Mohammad Tarmoum, Deputy Minister of Planning and Development of Yemen.

5. *Issues of importance for the future of the ESCWA region*
(Agenda item 9)

64. The representative of the secretariat introduced this item, which is covered in E/ESCWA/22/6 and comprises two parts.

(a) *The impact of the lack of stability in the Western Asia region on economic and social development*

65. Under this item, a round-table discussion was held on the impact of the lack of stability in the Western Asia region, chaired by His Excellency Mr. Khalil Hrawi, Minister of Defence of Lebanon, in which the following main speakers participated: His Excellency Mr. Elias Sabaa, former minister of Lebanon; Ms. Fahima Sharaf Al-Din, Secretary-General of the Arab Sociological Association in Lebanon; and Mr. Hisham Sharaby, lecturer at universities in the United States of America and at the Lebanese University. Heads of delegation also participated.

66. This discussion considered the impact of the lack of stability in the Western Asia region on economic and social development. The aim was to promote a frank debate on the consequences of the war against Iraq and their effect on economic, social and cultural development, and to consider the positions that should be adopted by Governments and peoples in order to confront the challenges and coordinate with the international community and its forces that were opposed to war.

67. Mr. Khalil Hrawi facilitated the discussion by referring to the following points:

(a) The wars unleashed by Israel throughout the past 50 years have kept the Arab world from developing and diverted resources from development to military endeavours. The Arab world must therefore confront Israel on the economic and social fronts;

(b) The permanent state of unrest that prevails in the Arab world hinders the activation of regional cooperation and joint Arab activity;

(c) The current situation in Iraq affects every Arab country;

(d) The lack of stability in the Arab region is not a recent development, but has become a characteristic of that region because of the Israeli aggression that has consumed a significant share of the economic resources of the countries of the region;

(e) Once regional agreement has been reached as to a political vision for development and appropriate mechanisms have been established for joint Arab activity, the threat posed by Israel may be

confronted and the positive advantages of the Arab region, which enjoys a shared culture and a common language, may be emphasized;

(f) There is an urgent need for international consideration of the crisis in Iraq; the role of the United Nations must be strengthened and a legitimate Government that may take over the reins of power in that country must be expeditiously formed.

68. Mr. Elias Sabaa, in his intervention, focused on the following points:

(a) It is likely that the short-term economic consequences of the war will largely be concentrated on the price of oil, investment, the role of the private sector and regional cooperation;

(b) In the medium term, oil prices will tend to fall because the decision to increase production and restrict the price of oil is in the hands of the controlling foreign forces, which will attempt to impose prices that serve their interests. This will result in a fall in oil revenues and, in consequence, a state of economic stagnation and recession in the countries of the region. It is therefore essential that the Arab petroleum producing States be urged to bring all possible pressure to bear on the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) to maintain production quotas and refuse to accept any reduction in the price of oil;

(c) The doubt and uncertainty as to future events in the region will affect opportunities for both domestic and foreign investment, with the exception of certain Government and private investments that are linked to the conditions of the political relationship between the local and foreign forces;

(d) The role of the public sector will diminish as a result of the privatization policies that are being widely applied throughout the region. Arab Governments should therefore reflect on the privatization of the remaining public sector institutions and reconsider privatization policies, with a view to balancing the public and private sectors;

(e) It is certain that negative economic conditions at the level of investment, stability and oil revenue will exacerbate the fragmentation, fracturing and recession of economic growth rates throughout the Arab region. Greater efforts must therefore be made to achieve regional integration and strengthen joint Arab action.

69. Mr. Hisham Sharaby made the following points:

(a) The lack of stability has arisen from the failure to build modern states that can effect change and overcome inherited traditional culture based on the "nanny" or paternal system. This has led to the perpetuation of the existing economic, social and education systems that are based on the role of the paternal system;

(b) The drive towards modernization, the overcoming of the paralysis in the Arab political system and addressing the feelings of despair and depression in the peoples of the region are all things that can only be dealt with by restoring to those peoples their ability to work and produce;

(c) There is a need for social reform based on visions and practical methods of dealing with change, with a view to preparing to effect the necessary rapprochement between Governments and social movements and give a support role in the reform process throughout the Arab region to Arab intellectuals and researchers.

70. In her intervention, Ms. Fahima Sharaf Al-Din focused on the following points:

(a) The absence from the region of any value system with regard to equality has made a significant contribution to the lack of stability. Of particular significance are values relating to such vital questions as popular participation, integration and rationality;

(b) The lack of stability resulting from the absence of any value system of equality is accompanied by the inadequacy of pressure groups in Arab countries and the low standards of living of large parts of society caused by poverty and marginalization. Those matters call for a complete revision of social and economic policy and for the formulation of a different political vision of participation and equality. Means must be found of responding to challenges and meeting the demands of reform at all levels;

(c) The geographical location of the region and the international competition for its resources have contributed to the lack of stability. It is therefore more necessary than ever before to support the United Nations and the League of Arab States at every level, in order to maintain their role, which is necessary under such conditions of extreme decline and in this state of anticipation and the consequent lack of stability which makes it essential to find solutions rather than merely researching consequences;

(d) The formulation of a regional concept, to which the various actors in the region contribute, could make a significant contribution to finding bases for coordination and cooperation to be implemented at international level.

71. During the discussion that took place under this item, the following main points were raised:

(a) There is a need to institute reform by concentrating on the liberation of the individual and of thought;

(b) There is a need to make a connection between the various parties of Arab society and its organizations and to activate the role of civil society and its connection with decision makers. Attempts must be made to establish democracy as the basis for the connection between Arab countries and to implant the idea that the individual should accept the decision of the group rather than vice versa;

(c) The psychological impact of paternalism on generations;

(d) A focus on the role of the United Nations in restoring security and stability and establishing international legitimacy and on the role of other regional organizations, including, for example, the League of Arab States, in their capacity as an intellectual forum and platform for dialogue;

(e) A vision must be formulated with the human being as the central focus of development;

(f) The lack of stability in the Arab region must be considered from the international viewpoint, given that it is partially explained by the struggles that are taking place with a view to gaining control over the wealth of the Middle East.

(b) *The strengthening of Arab regional cooperation*

72. The representative of the secretariat introduced this item, which is covered in E/ESCWA/22/6/Add.1. He noted that at ESCWA, regional cooperation has taken two main forms. The first is the harmonization of methods of applying sectoral policies in various fields and the second is the strengthening of Arab regional cooperation in a direct and practical manner by implementing specific projects. He affirmed the priority of Arab regional cooperation. Methodologies must be formulated and institutions established in order to apply those methodologies and raise public awareness.

73. Some of the successes that had been achieved in that arena included the adoption of the Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq; the establishment of a consultative body on regional cooperation; the establishment of the Globalization and Regional Integration Division; the creation of a subprogramme concerned with regional integration and globalization; the issuance of a publication entitled *Annual Review of Developments in Globalization and Regional Integration in the Countries of the ESCWA Region*; and the holding of a workshop on Arab regional integration.

74. During the discussion of this item, the following points were raised:

(a) The importance of strengthening Arab regional cooperation by applying specific projects and of achieving increased coordination with the League of Arab States in all fields and, in particular, with respect to the Pan-Arab Free Trade Area;

(b) The need to clarify for member countries the rules of origin and to create an appropriate dispute settlement mechanism and publicize its existence;

(c) Given the sensitivity of the freedom of movement of individuals between the countries of the region, guidance could be sought from the relevant European model;

(d) Reference was made to the fact that Saudi Arabia was one of the first countries to demonstrate an interest in activating joint Arab action and to sign the Pan-Arab Free Trade Area Agreement. Further reference was made to the Prince Abdulla initiative for joint Arab action which will be put before the forthcoming Arab Summit.

6. *Draft programme of work and priorities for the biennium 2004-2005*
(Agenda item 10)

75. The representative of the secretariat introduced this item, which is covered in E/ESCWA/22/7, and made the following points in a visual presentation:

(a) The draft programme of work and priorities for the biennium 2004-2005 complements the current programme of work for the biennium 2002-2003;

(b) The aim of the programme of work and priorities is to promote social and economic development in the region and provide guidance on the sustainable use of the region's natural resources by facilitating Arab regional integration;

(c) A further aim is to confront the major challenges in the region, which include the lack of comprehensive, integrated and sustainable social policies that take into consideration the economic, social and environmental aspects of development; the impact of economic changes on the social aspect of development when considering the economic situation that is unsustainable in view of increasing population growth; the challenges of globalization; the liberalization of trade in conformity with WTO regulations; follow-up to the requirements of the technological revolution; and action to bridge the digital divide;

(d) The programme of work is based on the strategic methodology that was devised during the ESCWA restructuring process in the biennium 2002-2003, the aim of which is to highlight and strengthen existing elements and add new factors to the revised programme structure;

(e) The Commission continues to optimize its work by concentrating on four main fields, namely, water and energy, social policy, globalization and technology.

76. During the discussion of this item, the following points were raised:

(a) The secretariat was urged to ensure that the programme of work included activities relating to the development of human resources and of youth and women in particular;

(b) Stress was placed on the need to address the issue of the increasing population growth in the region; programmes should be included that address the issues of illiteracy, electronic data interchange and electronic commerce;

(c) Emphasis was given to the need for ESCWA to continue to undertake activities relating to capacity-building, consultancy services and technical cooperation services, and to strengthen and extend the benefits of such activities;

(d) Questions were raised regarding the employment process and the increase of geographical representation, and clarification was sought as to whether financial allocations were made for each member country. The needs of the least-developed countries were stressed;

(e) It was important that any conflict should be avoided between regional particularities and international standards, in case that should impact on certain issues, the most important being human rights and women;

(f) A call was made for the human rights standards set in international instruments and agreements to be incorporated into ESCWA activities and, in particular, the "rights-based approach" with respect to the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights and the right to development;

(g) A study should be made of the alternatives for adjusting economic policies in the ESCWA member countries, with a view to standardizing both their development goals and the undertakings that were assumed upon or in the course of accession to WTO.

77. The representative of the secretariat responded to those comments with the following explanations:

(a) Youth-related issues would continue to be addressed in ESCWA programmes; activities related to population continued to be implemented. Reference was made to the workshop that will be held in Cairo in 2004, which will focus on the importance of population policies and the fact that they complement development policies; and to cooperation with UNFPA and the Population Division in New York;

(b) No allocations by country were made in the budget; the programme of work addressed the least developed ESCWA member countries;

(c) Information on vacant posts at ESCWA was made available to all on the United Nations Internet site and applications for such posts must be made through that site.

7. *The role of ESCWA in coordinating regional activities of the United Nations system*
(Agenda item 11)

78. The representative of the secretariat introduced this item, which is covered in E/ESCWA/22/8, and made the following points in a visual presentation:

(a) The United Nations Regional Coordination Group, which comprises representatives of all the United Nations organizations working in the ESCWA region, is the appropriate forum and mechanism for strengthening regional cooperation between those organizations;

(b) That Group held its sixth meeting on 28 June 2002 at ESCWA headquarters in Beirut. The meeting was attended by 19 regional organizations. A further meeting is expected to be held on 29 and 30 May 2003 in preparation for the convening of an important meeting in October 2003 that will be attended by Ms. Louise Frechette, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations;

(c) At their last meeting, the members of the Group agreed on the need to highlight United Nations achievements in the region in the economic and social fields and on the need to identify a regional vision and strategy in which regional priorities would be specified and on which the work of United Nations organizations could focus;

(d) One of the most important issues on which the Group meeting had focused was the Group's Internet site, which had been created by ESCWA within its own web site with a view to being one mechanism for presenting the set of regional activities undertaken by the members of the Group;

(e) Reference was made to the fact that the Group is currently considering the establishment of a training centre for the settlement of armed conflicts and promotion of the culture of peace.

79. During the discussion on this item, the following points were raised:

(a) Clarification was sought as to the existence of a mechanism for coordination between the five United Nations regional commissions;

(b) A call was made for increased regional cooperation;

(c) The need was stressed for coordination with respect to the overlapping remits of the organizations.

80. The representative of the secretariat responded to those points with the following explanations:

(a) Cooperation would definitely continue between ESCWA and NGOs and had already resulted in the signature of a number of agreements;

(b) Communication between ESCWA and the other regional commissions was effected through the Regional Commissions New York Office and the holding of periodic meetings.

8. *Designating the sessions of the Commission as the forum for a biennial pledging conference: resolution 236 (XXI)*
(Agenda item 12)

81. The representative of the secretariat introduced this item, which is covered in E/ESCWA/22/9/Rev.1 and urged ESCWA member countries to announce their contributions to Commission resources. He stressed the importance of extrabudgetary resources in extending the scope of ESCWA activities to include a larger number of countries and permit other Arab countries to benefit from its services; in responding to such unexpected developments as conflicts; and in supporting programme activities.

82. He compared the ratio of voluntary contributions to the regular budget in the five United Nations regional commissions and demonstrated that ESCWA received the lowest level of such contributions, amounting to no more than 4.7 per cent of the regular budget. That proportion is much smaller than in the other commissions: in the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, contributions represent some 40 per cent of the regular budget.

83. With respect to voluntary contributions, the representative of the secretariat clarified the following points:

(a) For a number of years the United Nations budget has suffered from negative growth and as a result, it has been forced to have recourse to other means, of which the most significant are contributions;

(b) The voluntary contributions made to ESCWA in the past were used to relocate the organization from Jordan to Lebanon;

(c) Voluntary contributions to the Commission were of more than quantitative significance, because they demonstrated concern for the organization and its programmes of work and gave a good impression;

(d) Voluntary contributions gave the secretariat greater flexibility and allowed it to implement more field projects in response to the wishes of certain member countries;

(e) Through this item, the secretariat sought to urge officials in member countries to provide ESCWA with similar support to that received by the other regional commissions and guarantee its continuation. The secretariat would send to member countries for their consideration proposals for projects for which funding was sought.

9. *Time and venue of the twenty-third session of the Commission*
(Agenda item 13)

84. It was decided to hold the twenty-third session of the Commission in Beirut in April 2005.

10. *Other business*
(Agenda item 14)

85. No proposals were received under this agenda item.

11. *Adoption of the report of the Commission on its twenty-second session*
(Agenda item 15)

86. The Commission adopted the draft report on its twenty-second session with the proviso that the amendments that had been agreed upon should be incorporated therein.

III. ISSUES TO BE BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA

87. At its sixth plenary meeting, held on 17 April 2003, the Commission adopted a number of resolutions and decided to submit them to the Economic and Social Council for its attention. Their texts are as follows:

241 (XXII). THE IMPACT OF THE LACK OF STABILITY IN THE ARAB REGION ON ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,

Noting with deep concern the impact of the lack of stability in the Arab region on the economic, social and environmental situation and on the development process in general,

Recalling that the instability in the region has continued over successive decades as a result of continuous wars and, in particular, the Israeli occupation of Arab territories; and the economic and social impact of that sustained situation,

Noting also that the restructuring process undergone by Commission programmes of work has added to the responsibilities of ESCWA that of promoting post-conflict development and reconstruction, as stated in the revised medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005,

Further recalling the practical approach adopted with respect to the relevant activities and, specifically, the Commission's contribution to the implementation of the multidisciplinary project in southern Lebanon and, in cooperation with the Palestinian Authority, its initiation of measures to assist Palestine to rehabilitate its economic sectors,

1. *Requests* the Secretariat to study the impact of war on economic and social development and the environment in Iraq, ensuring that its activities in that field are coordinated with those of other United Nations bodies and the relevant regional organizations, and to provide assistance in this respect in the framework of the purposes and principles of the United Nations;

2. *Also requests* the secretariat to identify the activities that should be undertaken by ESCWA as part of the post-war reconstruction and rehabilitation process, and to incorporate such activities into its programme of work and specializations;

3. *Further requests* the secretariat to establish a mechanism for monitoring the effects of current and future crises, with a view to identifying and analysing the extent of the impact on economic and social development in the region of such events, and to assist countries in dealing with such crises;

4. *Requests* the Executive Secretary to submit a report on the matter to the Commission at its twenty-third session.

6th plenary meeting
17 April 2003

242 (XXII). THE AMENDMENTS MADE TO THE REVISED PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR THE BIENNIUM 2002-2003

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,

Cognizant of the progress made during 2002 in the implementation of the revised programme of work for the biennium 2002-2003,

Cognizant also of the amendments made to the programme of work as set forth in the annex to the report of the Executive Secretary on the activities of the Commission,[6]

Satisfied with the progress made, notwithstanding the ESCWA programme restructuring process,

Persuaded that it was necessary to introduce some amendments to those programmes in order to maintain their flexibility,

1. *Approves* the amendments made to the revised programme of work for the biennium 2002-2003;

2. *Requests* the secretariat to follow up implementation of the programme of work and, if necessary, to take responsibility for activities that address any changes that may take place in the ESCWA region;

3. *Further requests* the Executive Secretary to provide member countries with information on any further modifications to the programme of work for the biennium 2002-2003 and include that information in the progress report that is submitted to member countries in years when there is no session.

6th plenary meeting
17 April 2003

243 (XXII). ADOPTION OF THE AGREEMENT ON INTERNATIONAL RAILWAYS IN THE ARAB MASHREQ

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,

Conscious of the importance of facilitating transport and trade in order to achieve Arab regional integration and of working to eliminate the barriers to the movement of interregional trade,

Recalling the Declaration on the adoption and development of an Integrated Transport System in the Arab Mashreq, that was made by the ESCWA Committee on Transport at its first session, of which cognizance was taken in resolution 212 (XX) dated 27 May 1999, on the basis that such a system was the appropriate mechanism for integrating the various systems of transport and providing links between the countries of the region and neighbouring countries,

Recalling also that the third session of the Committee on Transport, held from 5 to 7 March 2002, adopted the draft agreement on international railways in the Arab Mashreq, and that the fourth session of that Committee, held from 14 to 16 January 2003, adopted the revised text of the agreement,

Cognizant of the stages through which the agreement has passed in the course of preparation, before appearing in its current form, which takes into consideration the observations of member countries,[7]

1. *Adopts* the Agreement on International Railways in the Arab Mashreq;

2. *Urges* member countries to make the necessary arrangements for signing and ratifying the Agreement, in order that it may enter into force as soon as possible.

6th plenary meeting
17 April 2003

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[6] See E/ESCWA/22/4, p. 21.

[7] See the *Agreement on International Railways in the Arab Mashreq* (E/ESCWA/TRANS/2002/1/Rev.2), which was adopted and opened for signature on 14 April 2003.

244 (XXII). COOPERATION BETWEEN ESCWA MEMBER COUNTRIES WITH RESPECT TO SHARED WATER RESOURCES AND THE ARAB NETWORK FOR THE INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,

Referring to paragraphs 1-18 of the revised medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005, the revised programme of work for the biennium 2002-2003 in the field of water and the proposed programme of work for the biennium 2004-2005,

Referring also to the recommendations made by the Committee on Water Resources at its fifth session[8] held from 30 October to 1 November 2002 with respect to the importance of activating cooperation projects between member countries relating to shared water resources and the building of member country capacities with respect to the integrated management of water resources; and the importance of strengthening cooperation and integration in that field between training centres and institutes by establishing an Arab network for the integrated management of water resources,

Appreciative of the positive response of the member countries involved in the bilateral shared water resource cooperation projects overseen by the secretariat,

1. *Urges* member countries to complete the procedures necessary for official approval of memorandums of understanding relating to bilateral shared water resource cooperation projects, and to provide support for the technical task forces that are carrying out such projects;

2. *Adopts* the recommendation made by the Committee on Water Resources at its fifth session calling for the establishment of an Arab network for the integrated management of water resources and the activation of its role, in coordination with the ESCWA secretariat;

3. *Also urges* specialist water training and research centres and institutes in Arab countries to become members of that network;

4. *Further urges* member countries, international organizations, donors and funding institutions to provide the funding necessary to activate that network;

5. *Requests* the Executive Secretary to continue to promote projects and activities relating to shared water resources and the Arab network for the integrated management of water resources and to follow up evaluation of implementation, with a view to supporting national and regional capacity-building in the field of the integrated management of water resources.

6th plenary meeting
17 April 2003

245 (XXII). THE ESCWA INITIATIVE FOR ACTIVATING THE ROLE OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION IN ACHIEVING THE MILLENNIUM GOALS

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,

Aware of the importance of science, technology and technological innovation in achieving the Millennium Goals and, in particular, the alleviation of unemployment and poverty,

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[8] See *Report of the Committee on Water Resources on its Fifth Session* (E/ESCWA/ENR/2002/23).

Noting the positive impact of science, technology and technological innovation, as part of the knowledge-based global economy, on the transfer to an information society and on the creation of new employment opportunities and the alleviation of poverty,

Considering it necessary to promote research and development activities in the ESCWA member countries and for those countries to coordinate in the fields to which they accord priority,

Aware of the opportunities offered by the new technologies for establishing systems for education, vocational training and the alleviation of poverty and for providing poor and marginalized societies with valuable chances for employment in new areas,

1. *Adopts* the recommendations made by the Forum on Technology, Employment and Poverty Alleviation in the Arab Countries that was held in Beirut on 16 and 17 July 2002 and by the first meeting of the ESCWA Consultative Committee on Scientific and Technological Development and Technological Innovation, which was held in Beirut on 18 July 2002,[9] with respect, in particular, to the following:

(a) The formulation of a new vision for the future of science, technology and technological innovation, and of national policies and strategies for implementation related thereto;

(b) The establishment of a new institutional framework in ESCWA member countries, with the focus on centres of excellence, technology parks, technology incubators and service and productive communities, all supported by high technology;

(c) The strengthening and coordination of research and development endeavours and increasing of the amounts allocated thereto in ESCWA member countries;

(d) The development of the national education and vocational training systems, with a view to eradicating traditional and technological illiteracy;

2. *Requests* the secretariat to prepare a study on the position of the countries of the region with respect to vital technology in the field of agriculture, food and medicines production; formulate priorities for the region with respect to those fields; and put forward proposals for executive initiatives to assist the countries of the region in confronting the demands arising from international trends that affect the future of the sector;

3. *Further requests* the secretariat to follow up implementation of the above-mentioned recommendations by means of a regional initiative that aims to achieve specific goals and tangible results, within an appropriate time-frame;

4. *Requests* the Executive Secretary to submit a report on the matter to the Commission at its twenty-third session.

6th plenary meeting
17 April 2003

246 (XXII). THE FORMULATION OF A REGIONAL PLAN OF ACTION FOR AN INFORMATION SOCIETY

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,

Cognizant of United Nations General Assembly resolution 56/183 dated 21 December 2001, concerning the World Summit on the Information Society, to be held in two phases, the first in Geneva in December 2003 and the second in Tunis in 2005,

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[9] See *Report of the Forum on Technology, Employment and Poverty Alleviation in the Arab Countries* (E/ESCWA/TECH/2002/2) and *Report of the First Meeting of the Consultative Committee on Scientific and Technological* Development and Technological Innovation (E/ESCWA/TECH/2002/1).

Aware of the great importance of information and communication technologies as effective tools for accelerating economic and social development and establishing the information society,

Guided by the outcomes of the preparatory conferences for the Summit and, in particular, the draft declaration of principles and plan of action that will be submitted for adoption to the World Summit in December 2003,

Commending the Western Asia Preparatory Conference for the World Summit on the Information Society, which was held in Beirut from 4 to 6 February 2003, and the Declaration of Principles issued by that Conference,

Taking into consideration the role that ESCWA expects to play in the consultations undertaken with the regional and international organizations working in Arab countries with a view to formulating a single regional plan of action for the Arab region, given that the countries of the region are culturally and historically related,

1. *Calls upon* the secretariat to propose a regional plan of action for building the information society that respects the particularities and linguistic and cultural priorities of the region, and to coordinate in that regard with the League of Arab States;

2. *Requests* the secretariat to make the necessary amendments to the programme of work for the biennium 2002-2003, in conformity with the outcomes of the preparatory conferences and the Western Asia Preparatory Conference for the World Summit on the Information Society;

3. *Also requests* the secretariat to review the proposed programme of work and priorities for the biennium 2004-2005 in order to ensure that it contains activities relating to that regional plan;

4. *Further requests* the secretariat to continue the effective participation in the preparations for the World Summit on the Information Society and, accordingly, to make the requisite amendments to the programme of work for the biennium 2002-2003.

6th plenary meeting
17 April 2003

247 (XXII). THE DEVELOPMENT OF STATISTICAL WORK IN THE ESCWA REGION

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,

Cognizant of the need to provide statistics prepared in a scientific manner in order to assist countries in formulating the economic and social policies necessary for the national development process,

Noting the need of the countries of the region to develop national statistical bodies and update mechanisms for and methods of preparing and analysing their economic and social data and indicators,

1. *Requests* the secretariat to assist the countries of the region in adopting and applying the scientific standards employed internationally for amassing, analysing and disseminating statistical data and indicators, with a view to enabling those countries to formulate economic and social policies and monitor progress towards the achievement of national development objectives;

2. *Also requests* the secretariat to encourage the countries of the region and provide them with the necessary technical support to enable them to become parties to the Special Data Dissemination Standard applied by the International Monetary Fund;

3. *Urges* member countries to participate in the project for the development of national gender statistics programmes.

6th plenary meeting
17 April 2003

248 (XXII). THE PARTICIPATION OF ESCWA MEMBER COUNTRIES IN THE INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON PROGRAMME

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,

Cognizant of the importance of the seventh session of the International Comparison Programme developed for the period 2003-2005, and of its benefit to member countries with respect to the use of actual economic standards when making economic comparisons between various countries and regions of the world and when concluding trade and investment-related bilateral and multilateral agreements with other member and non-member countries,

Cognizant also of the overwhelming importance of this Programme when measuring the various levels of poverty and standards of living and for making sound economic comparisons that facilitate the taking of prudent decisions,

Considering that this Programme has a positive impact on raising the level of statistical and economic capacities in member countries,

Appreciative of the response of member countries who have expressed their desire to participate in this important Programme and to appoint representatives for purposes of coordination,

1. *Expresses its satisfaction* that ESCWA has joined the Programme in its capacity as the party responsible for its implementation in the Western Asia region;

2. *Urges* all member countries who have not yet indicated a desire to take part in the Programme to join it forthwith, support it, cooperate with those responsible for it, and, when possible, provide it with financial support;

3. *Recommends* that the secretariat includes activities related to the International Comparison Programme in its programmes of work.

6th plenary meeting
17 April 2003

249 (XXII). STRENGTHENING CONSULTANCY SERVICES AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION ACTIVITIES IN THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,

Cognizant of the important part played by the consultancy services and technical cooperation provided by the Commission to member countries in strengthening capacities in those countries,

Cognizant also of the fact that the secretariat's field activities complement its research and analysis activities and help to meet the development needs of member countries,

Affirming that consultancy services and technical cooperation activities are one of the main methods adopted by the Commission in order to assist member countries in meeting specific needs,

1. *Commends* the positive role played by the secretariat with respect to consultancy services and technical cooperation at national and regional levels;

2. *Calls upon* the secretariat to strengthen consultancy services and technical cooperation activities, given that they are of such benefit to member countries;

3. *Requests* the secretariat to expend greater efforts to effect coordination between its research and analysis activities and, on the one hand, its technical cooperation activities and, on the other, its consultancy services;

4. *Urges* member countries and local, regional and international donor bodies to increase their financial support for the Commission's consultancy services and technical cooperation activities.

6th plenary meeting
17 April 2003

250 (XXII). ADOPTION OF THE FINAL REPORTS OF THE SUBSIDIARY BODIES OF THE COMMISSION

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,

Having considered the recommendations set forth in the final reports of the subsidiary bodies of the Commission,[10]

Recognizing the importance of taking action to implement those recommendations, in order to enable ESCWA to undertake its responsibilities in the special areas pertaining to its subsidiary bodies,

1. *Adopts* the recommendations contained in those reports;

2. *Requests* member countries to cooperate with ESCWA in formulating and activating measures that will promote the implementation thereof.

6th plenary meeting
17 April 2003

251 (XXII). PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 2004-2005

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,

Recalling resolution 238 (S-IV) dated 11 March 2002 concerning the revised medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005, and the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005,

Taking into consideration the fact that the proposed programme budget may be amended when discussed by the relevant committees and the United Nations General Assembly,

1. *Approves* the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005;

2. *Requests* the secretariat to distribute the programme budget to member countries once it has been endorsed by the General Assembly;

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[10] The reports of the subsidiary bodies are contained in E/ESCWA/ENR/2002/22; E/ESCWA/ENR/2002/23; E/ESCWA/TRANS/2002/2; E/ESCWA/2003/IG.1/6; E/ESCWA/SD/IG.1/9; E/ESCWA/STAT/2002/3; and E/ESCWA/GRID/2003/IG.1/7.

3. *Further requests* the Executive Secretary to submit a report to the Commission at its twenty-third session on the progress that has been achieved in implementing the programme of work and to inform it of any amendments that have been made thereto.

6th plenary meeting
17 April 2003

252 (XXII). REHABILITATION AND ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION IN PALESTINE

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,

Recalling resolution 237 (XXI) dated 11 May 2001 concerning rehabilitation of economic sectors in Palestine,

Recalling also the grievous conditions in Palestine under Israeli occupation and the resulting difficulties that hinder implementation of the aforementioned resolution,

1. *Affirms* the need urgently and at the earliest possible opportunity to convene an Arab-international forum on rehabilitation and reconstruction as a step towards the establishment of an independent Palestinian State;

2. *Requests* the secretariat to exert efforts to increase Arab participation in reconstruction and rehabilitation and link such participation to the relevant international programmes;

3. *Affirms also* the role of the Palestinian Authority and the institutions of Palestinian civil society in formulating the practical plan for reconstruction and rehabilitation, given that it is the body with true interest in that regard and represents all the economic and social sectors and, in particular, the transport and communications, trade, industry, agriculture, education, health, tourism and other damaged sectors, and has responsibility for alleviating the desperate situation of the refugee camps under occupation;

4. *Further affirms* the need for the secretariat to assist the Palestinian National Authority by delegating experts to evaluate the losses suffered in economic and social sectors and providing assistance in finding a relevant mechanism, through international organizations and institutions, for compensating such losses in the various sectors, in order to enable them to recover and undertake their duties in the future, thereby contributing to the development process;

5. *Requests* the Executive Secretary to follow up implementation of this resolution, and to submit a report on progress achieved to the Commission at its twenty-third session.

6th plenary meeting
17 April 2003

253 (XXII). THE INCREASE OF DONATIONS TO THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,

Recalling its resolution 236 (XXI) dated 11 May 2001 concerning the designation of the sessions of the Commission as the forum for a biennial pledging conference,

Affirming the importance of extrabudgetary resources in enabling the secretariat to expand the range of its activities and deal with unforeseen developments in the ESCWA region,

1. *Thanks* the member countries that have contributed to the Trust Fund for ESCWA Regional Activities;[11]

2. *Also thanks* the United Nations, international and regional organizations and the funds, individuals and other parties for their help in supporting Commission activities with extrabudgetary resources;

3. *Urges* member countries to increase their donations to match the voluntary funds made available to the other United Nations regional Commissions.

6th plenary meeting
17 April 2003

[11] To see names and contributions of donors, see E/ESCWA/22/4(Part VII)/Rev.1.

Annex I

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

A. ESCWA MEMBERS

Bahrain

H.E. Mr. Majeed bin Mohsen Al Alawi
Minister of Labour and Social Affairs
Manama

H.E. Sheikh Mohammed bin Khalifa bin Ali Al Khalifa
Deputy Minister of Communications
Manama

H.E. Mr. Waheed Mubarak Sayyar
Ambassador of Bahrain to Syria
Damascus

H.E. Sheikha Hind bint Salman Al Khalifa
Under-Secretary for Social Affairs
Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
Manama

Mr. Sabah Salem Al Dosari
Manager, Office of the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs
Manama

Mr. Radhi Mehdi Al Sammak
Senior Specialist, International Relations Section
Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
Manama

Egypt

H.E. Mr. Mohammad Zeki Abou Amer
Minister of State for Administrative Development
Cairo

H.E. Mr. Hussein Dhirar
Ambassador of Egypt to Lebanon
Beirut

Mr. Mohamed Talaat Khattab
Chief Under-Secretary
Ministry of Transport
Cairo

Mr. Majdi Sweilem Radi
Director of International Economic Affairs
Ministry for Foreign Affairs
Cairo

Ms. Amira Abdel-Rahim
Diplomatic Attaché
Egyptian Embassy in Lebanon
Beirut

Jordan

H.E. Mr. Bassem Ibrahim Awadallah
Minister of Planning
Amman

H.E. Mr. Anmar Abdel Halim Al Hmoud
Ambassador of Jordan to Lebanon
Beirut

Mr. Tayseer Radhwan Al-Samadi
Director, Policies and Studies Directorate
Ministry of Planning
Amman

Kuwait

Ms. Sarah A. Al-Duwaisan
Under-Secretary
Ministry of Planning
Kuwait

Mr. Hamad Monawer Al Musailem
Assistant Under-Secretary
Planning and Follow-up Sector
Ministry of Planning
Kuwait

Mr. Sami Abdul Aziz Al Hamad
First Secretary
Embassy of Kuwait in Lebanon
Beirut

Mr. Bader S.A. Al-Rifai
Under-Secretary Office Department Manager
Ministry of Planning
Kuwait

Mr. Jaber Abbas Qabazard
External Coordination Supervisor
Ministry of Planning
Kuwait

Lebanon

H.E. Mr. Mahmoud Hammoud
Minister of Foreign and Emigrants Affairs
Beirut

H.E. Mr. Najib Mikati
Minister of Transport
Beirut

H.E. Mr. Khalil Al-Hrawi
Minister of Defence
Beirut

H.E. Mr. Antoine Chedid
Director of the International Organizations
Ministry of Foreign and Emigrant Affairs
Beirut

Mr. Hassan Mohamed Hashim
General Director of Investment
Ministry of Energy and Water
Beirut

Mr. Karim Yazbek
Vice President
Council for Development and Reconstruction
Beirut

Ms. Vivian Ghbeira
Director, Cooperation and Industrial Relations Department
Ministry of Industry
Beirut

Ms. Rafif Kobeissi Berro
Director, External Trade Department
Ministry of Economy and Trade
Beirut

Ms. Najwa Yaacoub
Statistician
Central Administration of Statistics
Beirut

Mr. Samih Nayef Wehbe
Expert, Ministry of Environment
Beirut

Ms. Samar Malek Azar
International Laws Specialist
Ministry of Environment
Beirut

Ms. Nancy Khoury
Public Relations and External Affairs
Ministry of Environment
Beirut

Oman

H.E. Mr. Mohammed bin Nasser Al-Khusaibi
Secretary-General
Ministry of National Economy
Muscat

H.E. Mr. Amer bin Hamad Al-Hijri
Ambassador of Oman to Lebanon
Beirut

Mr. Saleh Abdulah Al-Farsi
Director General, Information and Publication Center
Ministry of National Economy
Muscat

Mr. Mohammed bin Abdullah Al-Mahrouki
Director General, Private Sector Affairs
Ministry of National Economy
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Mr. Mohammed Yahya Al-Shabibi
Director of Economic Organizations Department
Ministry of National Economy
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Mr. Abdul Hakim Ahmed Al-Ansari
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Mr. Ahmad bin Barakat Al Ibrahim
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Beirut

Palestine

H.E. Mr. Mitri Tanas Abu Aita
Minister of Transport
Ministry of Transport
Ramallah

Mr. Mohammad Amin Jaradat
Director General
Ministry of Transport
Ramallah

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H.E. Mr. Abdullah Mohammad Al-Khater
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Beirut

Mr. Hamad Salem Al Khalifa
Chief, Road Transport Section
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Doha

Mr. Hasan Ali Al-Nuaimy
Chief, International Affairs Section
Customs and Ports General Authority
Doha

Mr. Mohammad Abdullah Al-Maadhid
Chief, Proficiency Certification and Personnel Affairs
Customs and Ports General Authority
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Second Secretary
Embassy of Qatar in Lebanon
Beirut

Saudi Arabia

H.E. Mr. Fouad Sadek Moufti
Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to Lebanon
Beirut

Mr. Abdul Rahman Al-Khayyat
Consultant
Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Lebanon
Beirut

Mr. Mohammad Hussein Seraj
First Secretary, Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Lebanon
Beirut

Mr. Faisal Mohammad Al-Zawawi
First Secretary, Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Lebanon
Beirut

Syrian Arab Republic

H.E. Mr. Makram Ebeid
Minister of Transport
Damascus

Mr. Mousa Al Shaar
Minister Assistant
Ministry of Transport
Damascus

Mr. Akil Ismail
Director of Railway Transport
Ministry of Transport
Damascus

Mr. Mohammad Bassam Al-Sebaie
Assistant Chief
State Planning Authority
Damascus

Mr. Ibrahim Ali
Director, Central Bureau of Statistics
Damascus

United Arab Emirates

H.E. Sheikh Humaid bin Ahmad al-Mualla
Minister of Planning
Abu Dhabi

Mr. Ahmed Al Sayed M. Al Hashemi
Assistant Under-Secretary, Planning and Statistical Department
Ministry of Planning
Abu Dhabi

Mr. Mohammed A. Al Marzooqi
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Ministry of Communications
Abu Dhabi

Mr. Rashed A. Al Neaimi
Director, Central Statistical Department
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Abu Dhabi

United Arab Emirates (*continued*)

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Senior Road Engineer
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Ministry of Planning
Abu Dhabi

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Deputy Harbour Master
Seaport Authority, Mena Zayed
Abu Dhabi

Mr. Mohammed Saleh Samhan Al Nuaimi
Mezyed Customs Manager
Abu Dhabi Customs Department
Abu Dhabi

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Assistant Director, Roads Department
Dubai Municipality
Dubai

Mr. Ahmad Abdulla Bin Lahej
Senior Manager, Facilitation and Customs Procedures
Port, Customs and Free Zone Corporation
Dubai

Yemen

H. E. Mr. Abdul Rahman Mohammad Tarmoum
Deputy Minister of Planning and Development
Sanaa

Mr. Hakim Aghbari
Project Director
Rural Access Project, Central Management Office
Ministry of Public Works and Urban Development
Sanaa

Mr. Gamal Yaqoob Abdul Mageed
General Administration for Regional and International Organizations
Ministry of Planning and Development
Sanaa

B. States Members of the United Nations not members of the Commission

Libyan Arab Jamahiriya

Mr. Hussein Mohammad Al-Sharif
Chargé d'Affaires
Member of Libyan Arab Brotherhood Office
Beirut

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Moroccan Embassy in Lebanon
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Ambassador of Sudan to Lebanon
Beirut

C. Experts

Mr. Hisham Sharabi
Honorary Professor at Georgetown University
President of the Palestinian Centre in Washington

Mr. Elias Saba
Economist
Former Deputy and Former Minister
Beirut

Ms. Fahimi Milhem Charaf-Eddine
Secretary-General
Arab Society for Sociology
Beirut

D. UNITED NATIONS SECRETARIAT

Secretary-General Representative

Mr. Staffan de Mistura
Personal Representative of the Secretary-General for Southern Lebanon
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Regional Commissions/New York Office

Ms. Sulafa Al-Bassam
Chief, New York Office of the Regional Commissions
New York

Legal Council Office/United Nations Headquarters

Mr. Bradford C. Smith
Legal Officer/Treaty Section
New York

E. UNITED NATIONS PROGRAMMES AND AGENCIES

United Nations Children's Fund

Mr. Ekrem Birerdinc
UNICEF Representative
Beirut

Mr. Jan van Manen
Regional Programme Planning Officer
Middle East and North Africa
Amman

United Nations Development Programme

Mr. Christian De Clercq
United Nations Coordination Senior Advisor
Beirut

United Nations Population Fund

Mr. Abdul Muniem Abu-Nuwar
Director of the UNFPA Country-Technical Services Team for the Arab States
Amman

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Mr. Amin Medani
Regional Representative for the Arab Region
Beirut

Ms. Afaf Abbas
Regional Representative for the ESCWA Region
Beirut

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Mr. Abdel Karim Ghoul
Assistant Regional Representative
Beirut

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

Mr. Alfredo Miccio
Director of UNRWA Affairs
Beirut

United Nations Environment Programme

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Deputy Regional Director
Regional Office for West Asia (ROWA)
Manama

United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS

Dr. Hala Abou Taleb
Intercountry Programme Adviser
Intercountry Team for the Middle East and North Africa
Cairo

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Mr. Alexandre Schmidt
Coordinator
Beirut

Ms. Renee Sabagh
National Expert
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F. UNITED NATIONS SPECIALIZED AGENCIES

International Labour Organization

Mr. Taleb Rifai
Regional Director
Regional Office for Arab States
Beirut

United Nations Industrial Development Organization

Mr. Giuseppe Papuli
UNIDO Representative
Beirut

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Mr. Azzedine Z. Azzabi
FAO Representative a.i.
Beirut

G. INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS AND RELATED BODIES

League of Arab States

H.E. Mr. Abdrahman Sehebani
Deputy Secretary-General for Economic Affairs
Cairo

Mr. Muatasem R. Suleiman
Director of Finance and Trade and Investment Department
Cairo

Ms. Mawaheb Khallaf
Head of the Basic Services Sectors Department
Cairo

H. GOVERNMENTAL AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Saudi Fund for Development

Mr. Saud bin Abdul Rahman Abdulhadi
Economic Organization Specialist
Riyadh

Arab Industrial Development and Mining Organization

Talaat Al Dafer
Director General
Rabat

Mr. Hamed El Maamoun Alameddine
Director, Center of Standardization
Rabat

International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas

Mr. Anwar Hussein Agha
Beirut Executive Manager
Beirut

Arab Planning Institute

Mr. Issa Mohammad Al-Ghazali
General Manager
Kuwait

Union of Arab Banks

Mr. Fouad Mohamed Shaker Sayed Ahmed
Secretary-General
Beirut

Union of Arab Banks (*continued*)

Mr. Joseph Tarabeeh
President
Beirut

General Union of Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture for Arab Countries

Ms. Noha Hawwa Nehme
Responsible of Trade Issues
Beirut

Council of Ministers of Labour and Social Affairs in GCC States

Mr. Othman bin Abdullah Al-Towaijari
General Manager
Manama

Arab Organization for Agricultural Development

Mr. Salem Abdul Karim Al-Lawzi
General Manager
Khartoum

Mr. Al-Sadek Al-Fadhel Azrak
Director, International Cooperation Department
Khartoum

Organization of Islamic Conference

Mr. Albaraa Farouk Tarabzouni
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National Committee of Lebanese Women's Affairs

Ms. Randa Assi Berri
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Ms. Jumana Abu Al-Rous Mufrej
Manager
Beirut

Ms. Najwa Ramadan
Executive Office Member
Beirut

Ms. Ghada Hamdan Hodeib
Executive Office Member
Beirut

Ms. Izza Sharara Beidoun
Chief, Research and Documentation Committee
Beirut

Child and Mother Society

Sheikhah Lolwa bint Mohammad Al Khalifa
President
Manama

General Union of Palestinian Women

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Secretary-General
Ramallah

Ms. Nihaya Mohammad Taqla
In-Charge-of Internal Relations
Ramallah

Ms. Amne Kamel Suleiman
President, Lebanon Branch
Saida

Birzeit University

Mr. Nader Izzat Said
Director, Development Studies Programme
Palestine

Kuwaiti Federation of Women's Associations

Ms. Fatima Othman Al-Bakr
Chief, Information Committee
Kuwait

Arab Women Organization

Ms. Emily Issa Naffa
Administrative Committee Member
Amman

Imam Al-Sadr Foundation

Ms. Rabab Al-Sadr Sharaf-Eddine
President
Beirut

Mr. Abdul Amir Bassam
Research and Studies Office
Tyre

Lebanese Welfare Association

Mr. Boutros Hobeika
Public Relations Officer
Beirut

Lebanese Researchers Association

Ms. Fadia Hteit
General Coordinator
Beirut

Union of Northern Associations for Sustainable Development

Mr. Mazen Abboud
President
Beirut

Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World

Ms. Mona Chemali Khalaf
Director
Beirut

Lebanese Association for Popular Volunteers Groups

Mr. Kamel Mohanna
President
Beirut

Zayed Center for Coordination and Follow-up

Mr. Mohamed Abdel Wahab Al Redwan
Cultural Adviser
Abu Dhabi

National Center for Development and Rehabilitation

Mr. Khaled Tawfiq Muhtar
General Director
Beirut

Lebanese Women Council

Ms. Ikbal Mrad Doughan
President
Beirut

Hariri Foundation

Ms. Mirna Fouad Sabbagh
Programmes Director
Saida

Ms. Wafica Ezzeddine Skafi
Translator
Saida

Lebanese National Commission for UNESCO

Ms. Salwa Saniora Baassiri
Secretary-General
Beirut

Annex II

LIST OF DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED TO THE COMMISSION AT ITS TWENTY-SECOND SESSION

Symbol	Item	Title
E/ESCWA/22/1	3	Agenda
E/ESCWA/22/1/Add.1	3	Annotated agenda
E/ESCWA/22/2	4	Organization of work
E/ESCWA/22/3	5	Invitation to States Members of the United Nations and/or of the specialized agencies not members of the Commission to participate in the capacity of observer in the twenty-second session of the Commission
E/ESCWA/22/4	6	Report of the Executive Secretary on the activities of the Commission
E/ESCWA/22/4(Part I)	6 (a)	The role of ESCWA in supporting the mandate of the United Nations
E/ESCWA/22/4(Part II)	6 (b)	Progress made during 2002 in the implementation of the programme of work for the biennium 2002-2003: Regular programme activities
E/ESCWA/22/4(Part II)/Add.1	6 (b-i)	Progress made during 2002 in the implementation of the programme of work for the biennium 2002-2003: Coordination and cooperation between ESCWA and United Nations agencies, international organizations and civil society institutions
E/ESCWA/22/4 (Part II)/Add.2	6 (b-ii)	Progress made during 2002 in the implementation of the programme of work for the biennium 2002-2003: Technical cooperation activities
E/ESCWA/22/4(Part III)	6 (c)	Follow-up to implementation of the resolutions adopted by the Commission at its twenty-first session
E/ESCWA/22/4(Part III)/Add.1	6 (c-i)	The establishment of an ESCWA consultative committee on scientific and technological development and technological innovation: resolution 225 (XXI)
E/ESCWA/22/4(Part III)/Add.2	6 (c-ii)	Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003: resolution 232 (XXI)
E/ESCWA/22/4(Part III)/Add.3	6 (c-iii)	The strengthening of cooperation between member countries in the field of shared water resources: resolution 233 (XXI)
E/ESCWA/22/4(Part III)/Add.4	6 (c-iv)	Rationalization and increased efficiency of energy and the use of renewable sources of energy: resolution 234 (XXI)

Symbol	Item	Title
E/ESCWA/22/4(Part III)/Add.5	6 (c-v)	Adoption of the Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq: resolution 235 (XXI)
E/ESCWA/22/4(Part III)/Add.6	6 (c-vi)	Rehabilitation of economic sectors in Palestine: resolution 237 (XXI)
E/ESCWA/22/4(Part IV)	6 (d)	Follow-up action at regional level to United Nations international conferences
E/ESCWA/22/4(Part V)	6 (e)	Reports of the sessions of Commission subcommittees
E/ESCWA/22/4(Part VI)	6 (f)	Restructuring of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
E/ESCWA/22/4(Part VII)/Rev.1	6 (g)	Financial status of the Commission's programmes
E/ESCWA/22/5	8	Adoption of the Agreement on International Railways in the Arab Mashreq
E/ESCWA/22/6	9	Issues of importance for the future of the ESCWA region
E/ESCWA/22/6/Add.1	9 (b)	The strengthening of Arab regional cooperation
E/ESCWA/22/7	10	Draft programme of work and priorities for the biennium 2004-2005
E/ESCWA/22/8	11	The role of ESCWA in coordinating regional activities of the United Nations system
E/ESCWA/22/9/Rev.1	12	Designating the sessions of the Commission as the forum for a biennial pledging conference: resolution 236 (XXI)
E/ESCWA/22/10	15	Report of the Commission on its twenty-second session
E/ESCWA/22/INF.1		List of twenty-second session documents
E/ESCWA/22/INF.2		List of publications and documents issued by the Commission since its twenty-first session
E/ESCWA/22/INF.3		Information for participants

E/2003/41/Rev.1
E/ESCWA/22/10/Rev.1

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA

REPORT ON THE TWENTY-SECOND SESSION
14-17 April 2003

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL
OFFICIAL RECORDS: 2003

SUPPLEMENT No. 21

UNITED NATIONS
New York, 2003

NOTE

Symbols of United Nations documents are composed of capital letters combined with figures. Mention of such a symbol indicates a reference to a United Nations document.

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INTRODUCTION

1. The twenty-second session of the Commission was held pursuant to its resolution 196 (XVII) of 31 May 1994 on the frequency of ministerial sessions of the Commission.

2. This report covers the work of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia at its twenty-second session, held at United Nations House in Beirut from 14 to 17 April 2003.

3. The report focuses on the most important points raised in the discussions that took place on each agenda item without going into details. The Commission adopted the report unanimously at the final meeting of the session, held on 17 April 2003.

I. ISSUES CALLING FOR ACTION BY THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

4. At its sixth plenary meeting, held on 17 April 2003, the Commission adopted two resolutions and decided to submit them to the Economic and Social Council for action. The texts of those resolutions are set forth below:

239 (XXII). CONSIDERATION OF THE ESTABLISHMENT WITHIN THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA OF A UNITED NATIONS ARABIC LANGUAGE CENTRE

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,

Referring to General Assembly resolution 54/248 dated 23 December 1999 concerning the pattern of conferences,

Referring also to the requests and suggestions put forward to the Secretariat by the delegations of Arab States Members of the United Nations concerning Arabic language services and, in particular, to the proposal of the delegation of Egypt that is set forth in annex II of the Report of the Committee on Conferences[1] and the letter dated 31 July 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, written in his capacity as Chairman of the Arab Group for the month of July 2001, concerning multilingualism,[2]

Recognizing the importance of the coordinating role that could be played by the Commission, given that it is located in the Arab region, with respect to strengthening Arabic language services in the United Nations system in close cooperation with United Nations Headquarters Arabic Translation and Editorial Services and benefiting from the high level of expertise in the region,

1. *Calls upon* the secretariat to consider the establishment of a United Nations Arabic language centre, based at ESCWA, of which the objective, in cooperation with the Secretariat of the United Nations, and taking into consideration the requisite technical, financial and administrative needs, shall be to raise the technical and linguistic level of the Arabic terminology used in United Nations documents, in order to facilitate the use of the Arabic language in such documents;

2. *Also calls upon* the secretariat, in cooperation with the Secretariat of the United Nations, to undertake the establishment of a committee responsible for determining the competences of the aforementioned centre;

3. *Requests* the Executive Secretary to follow up implementation of this resolution and to submit a report on the progress achieved in that regard to the Commission at its twenty-third session.

6th plenary meeting
17 April 2003

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[1] A/49/32/Rev.1

[2] A/56/261

240 (XXII). THE ESTABLISHMENT WITHIN THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA OF A COMMITTEE ON WOMEN

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,

Aware of the importance of action relating to the empowerment of women and the improvement of their status, and of making available equal opportunities for their empowerment and increased participation at all levels of the development process,

Aware also of the importance of coordination with regard to the empowerment of women and of respect for the particularities, customs and culture of each Arab country in order to harmonize Arab positions at global conferences and following up the global conferences organized by the United Nations with a view to incorporating the regional dimension in international documents,

Affirming the importance of the involvement of the interested parties in ESCWA member countries in the planning, development and follow-up to implementation of secretariat programmes relating to the empowerment of women and of mainstreaming the gender perspective in activities and policies,

Guided by the action taken by the other United Nations regional Commissions that have established special committees on women,

Taking into consideration the recommendation made by the Committee on Social Development[3] at its fourth session, held in Beirut from 3 to 5 July 2002, concerning the establishment within ESCWA of a committee on women,

1. *Decides* to establish within ESCWA a committee on women comprising representatives of member countries who are specialists in women's issues, to be responsible for the following:

(a) To identify the women-related priorities of the ESCWA programmes of work and medium-term plans;

(b) To monitor developments with respect to the status of women and evaluate indicators and statistics with a view to formulating an integrated policy for the advancement and empowerment of women;

(c) To monitor the progress made in ESCWA secretariat women-related activities;

(d) To follow up global and regional conferences and the participation of member countries therein and coordinate the endeavours of member countries and regional organizations with regard to implementation of the resolutions and recommendations adopted at such conferences;

(e) To coordinate action at regional level towards the adoption of unified positions on the issue at international gatherings and in follow-up to the performance by member countries of the undertakings to which they made a commitment in human rights instruments concerning women;

(f) To prepare and implement field projects for the advancement and empowerment of women in ESCWA member countries and find the necessary funding for such projects;

(g) To accord the requisite importance to women in regions, in which wars and conflicts are prevalent and, in particular, to Palestinian women, who are suffering in the conditions in which the Palestinian people is living under the continuing Israeli occupation;

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[3] *Report on the Fourth Session of the Committee on Social Development* (E/ESCWA/SD/2002/IG.1/9).

2. *Decides also* that the committee on women shall hold its sessions biennially, with effect from 2004, and that an inaugural session should be held before the end of 2003;

3. *Requests* the Executive Secretary to establish a women's centre within the secretariat with the responsibility for acting as the secretariat of the Committee on Women;

4. *Further requests* the Executive Secretary to follow up implementation of this resolution and to submit a report on the matter to the Commission at its twenty-third session.

6th plenary meeting
17 April 2003

II. TWENTY-SECOND SESSION OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA

A. ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

5. The twenty-second session of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) was held in Beirut, Lebanon, from 14 to 17 April 2003. The work of the session was distributed over six meetings, in the course of which the Commission discussed the items on the agenda contained in paragraph 12 of this report and submitted the resolutions that it had adopted to the Economic and Social Council for action or for its attention.

6. The session was attended by the following members of ESCWA:[4] Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

7. Three States Members of the United Nations that are not members of ESCWA participated as observers in the work of the twenty-second session, namely, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Morocco and the Sudan.

8. In addition, representatives of the following United Nations entities attended as observers: the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General for Southern Lebanon; the New York Office of the Regional Commissions; the Office of Legal Affairs, United Nations Headquarters, New York; United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR); International Labour Organization (ILO); Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO); United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO); United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA); United Nations Environment Programme; the United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS); and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

9. Representatives of the following intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) also attended the session as observers: Arab Organization for Agricultural Development; Arab Planning Institute; Arab Women Organization of Jordan; International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas; Arab Industrial Development and Mining Organization; the Arab Society for Sociology; Birzeit University; the Child and Mother Society; the General Union of Palestinian Women; the Council of Ministers of Labour and Social Affairs in Gulf Cooperation Council States; the General Union of Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture for Arab Countries; the Hariri Foundation; the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World; the Imam Al-Sadr Foundation; the Kuwaiti Union for Women Associations; League of Arab States; the Lebanese Association for Popular Volunteer Groups; the Lebanese National Commission; the Lebanese Researchers Association; the Lebanese Welfare Association for the Handicapped; the Lebanese Women Council; the National Center for Development and Rehabilitation; Organization of the Islamic Conference; the National Committee on Lebanese Women's Affairs; the Saudi Fund for Development; the Union of Arab Banks; and the Union of Northern Associations for Sustainable Development.

1. *Election of officers*

10. Rule 12 of the Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia provides that "member countries shall assume the chairmanship of the sessions of the Commission on a rotating basis, in the Arabic alphabetical order employed by the United Nations". Accordingly, His Excellency Mr. Mohammad Zeki Abou Amer, head of the delegation of Egypt, assumed the Chairmanship of the twenty-second session. Rule 12 further provides that, "at the beginning of each session, the Commission shall elect from among the representatives of its members two Vice-Chairmen and

[4] For the names of participants, see annex I.

session, the Commission shall elect from among the representatives of its members two Vice-Chairmen and a Rapporteur, who shall remain in office until such time as their successors shall be elected and be eligible for re-election". Accordingly, His Excellency Mr. Abdullah Mohammad Al-Khater, head of the delegation of Qatar, and His Excellency Mr. Makram Ebeid, head of the delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic, were elected as Vice-Chairmen; and His Excellency Mr. Mitri Tanas Abu Aita, head of the delegation of Palestine, was elected as Rapporteur.

2. *Credentials*

11. In accordance with rule 11 of Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of the Commission, the credentials of the representatives as submitted to the Executive Secretary were examined by the officers and found to be in order.

3. *Agenda and organization of work*

12. At its first meeting the Commission adopted the agenda and organization of work of the session as set forth in documents E/ESCWA/22/1 and E/ESCWA/22/2 respectively.[5] The agenda adopted was as follows:

"1. Opening of the twenty-second session.

2. Election of officers.

3. Adoption of the agenda.

4. Proposed organization of work.

5. Invitation to States Members of the United Nations and/or of the specialized agencies not members of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia to participate in the capacity of observer in the twenty-second session of the Commission.

6. Report of the Executive Secretary on the activities of the Commission.

7. General debate: summary of the issues of which the twenty-second session is seized.

8. Adoption of the Agreement on International Railways in the Arab Mashreq.

9. Issues of importance for the future of the ESCWA region:

   (a) The impact of the lack of stability in the Western Asia region on economic and social development;

   (b) The strengthening of Arab regional cooperation.

10. Draft programme of work and priorities for the biennium 2004-2005.

11. The role of ESCWA in coordinating regional activities of the United Nations system.

12. Designating the sessions of the Commission as the forum for a biennial pledging conference: resolution 236 (XXI).

13. Time and venue of the twenty-third session of the Commission.

14. Other business.

15. Adoption of the report of the Commission on its twenty-second session."

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[5] Annex II includes the list of documents relating to agenda items.

B. OPENING OF THE SESSION

13. The opening meeting of the session was held under the patronage of the President of Lebanon, General Emile Lahoud. An inaugural statement was made by His Excellency Mr. Mahmoud Hammoud, Minister of Foreign and Emigrants Affairs of Lebanon, in his capacity as Chairman of the twenty-first session. He commended the particular interest demonstrated by the President in the role of the United Nations in general and of ESCWA, which Lebanon is proud to host in its capital, in particular. In his statement, he focused on the current situation in the region and in Iraq, a member country, and on the suffering to which the Iraqi people is being subjected. He stressed the need to demand that the occupying forces assume their responsibilities towards the Iraqi people in accordance with the Geneva Conventions. Such a demand did not imply any recognition of the occupation.

14. Mr. Hammoud also affirmed in his statement that regional integration is more necessary now than ever before. Such integration is embodied in the cooperation of the countries of the region through the international organizations, of which Lebanon considers ESCWA one of the most important.

15. He said that globalization would not wait for the weak societies of the region, but would destroy them if they were not properly prepared from the economic and social points of view. Those countries that were pioneering globalization must establish genuine cooperation and encourage effective dialogue between North and South, in order to prepare a healthy environment for international cooperation.

16. He called for the establishment of dialogue on finding means of cooperation that would lead to a better world in which the identities and particularities of peoples and societies were preserved, rather than being faced with the threat of being engulfed.

17. The Executive Secretary of ESCWA read out a message from the United Nations Secretary-General to the twenty-second session. In that message, the Secretary-General said that the session was taking place against a backdrop of turmoil and uncertainty in the region. The consequences of war and civil strife had diverted resources and energies away from development objectives.

18. The Secretary-General hoped that the session would discuss ways to explore the root causes of conflict, because that was the only way to build the foundations of enduring peace. The roots of conflict often lay in questions of governance, inequitable socio-economic development and uneven distribution of resources.

19. It was in relation to those matters that the role of the United Nations, including that of ESCWA, could be especially valuable.

20. He also made reference to the fact that the session would include a very important pledging conference, the first of its kind. Without the necessary additional resources, efforts to deal with development issues and, in particular, those associated with lack of stability, would be severely constrained.

21. He conveyed to participants his best wishes for a constructive session and expressed the hope that peace would prevail throughout the ESCWA region.

22. Ms. Mervat Tallawy, the Executive Secretary of ESCWA, then delivered a statement on behalf of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, in which she expressed her deep gratitude to His Excellency General Emile Lahoud, President of Lebanon, for honouring ESCWA with his presence at the opening of the session. His presence was a sign of his belief in the importance of commitment to international legitimacy and in the role of the United Nations and of ESCWA.

23. She referred to the difficult circumstances through which the region was passing and to the losses to Iraq and the whole region that were likely to ensue from the war against Iraq, which were expected to

amount to US$ 1,000 billion over the forthcoming decade, as a result of the decline in growth levels and the accumulation of losses in growth in years to come.

24. Concurrently with those difficult circumstances, the region was facing international changes and challenges, including economic globalization and the technological revolution, which affected the social situation.

25. The Executive Secretary reviewed the fields in which ESCWA operated and through which it aimed to achieve regional integration. Its activities focused on a limited number of priorities, namely, water, globalization, social policies and technology.

26. She noted that ESCWA had added to its programme of work activities that were concerned with post-war reconstruction and rehabilitation, including those being undertaken, in a very modest fashion, in southern Lebanon. Steps had been taken pursuant to the resolution adopted at the previous session concerning the rehabilitation of economic sectors in Palestine.

27. Among the action taken by ESCWA in order to promote regional integration in the region was the preparation of the Integrated Transport System in the Arab Mashreq. At the twenty-first session, the Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq had been adopted; during the twenty-second session, the Agreement on International Railways in the Arab Mashreq would be adopted.

28. In conclusion, the Executive Secretary saluted those who were calling for peace, who embodied the determination of the international community to adhere to international rules and laws and the principles of the United Nations. She also saluted the peoples of the region, who had endured difficulties for the past 50 years and remained steadfast in the hope of a better future.

C. MAIN TOPICS OF DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

1. *Invitation to States Members of the United Nations and/or of the specialized agencies not members of the Commission to participate in the capacity of observer in the twenty-second session of the Commission*
(Agenda item 5)

29. Three requests to participate in the capacity of observer in the twenty-second session were received, namely, from the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Morocco and the Sudan, as was indicated in paragraph 7 of this report.

2. *Report of the Executive Secretary on the activities of the Commission*
(Agenda item 6)

30. Under this item, the Executive Secretary presented the seven-part document E/ESCWA/22/4.

(a) *The role of ESCWA in supporting the mandate of the United Nations*

31. The representative of the secretariat introduced this item, which is covered in E/ESCWA/22/4(Part I). He briefly reviewed the activities undertaken by ESCWA in addition to its programme of work. Such activities were intended to establish communication between the Commission and the various sectors of society and took the form of providing representation for the Secretary-General at international gatherings; paying official visits to member countries with a view to getting first-hand information on the needs of those countries and acquainting them with ESCWA activities; and, finally, undertaking such media activities as the establishment of a web site in English and Arabic and permanent and temporary web pages; the publication of pamphlets and other issuances; the preparation of documentary films; and involvement in television programmes.

(b) *Progress made during 2002 in the implementation of the programme of work for the biennium 2002-2003*

32. The representative of the secretariat introduced this item, which is covered in E/ESCWA/22/4 (Part II), entitled *Regular programme activities*; E/ESCWA/22/4(Part II)/Add.1, entitled *Coordination and cooperation between ESCWA and United Nations agencies, international organizations and civil society institutions*; and E/ESCWA/22/4(Part II)/Add.2, entitled *Technical cooperation activities*. He reviewed the achievements realized by ESCWA over the past two years and made a visual presentation covering ESCWA's most important fields of action in the following areas: the activation of regional integration; preparation at regional level for international conferences and follow-up thereto; consultancy and technical cooperation services; and, finally, some of the model projects that it has undertaken in the countries of the region.

33. A detailed review was then presented by the chiefs of the ESCWA technical divisions of the most significant accomplishments of the past two years in the following activities: the servicing of intergovernmental and global meetings; the convening of meetings, conferences and workshops; the publication of studies and reports; the implementation of field projects; and the provision of consultancy services and technical assistance.

(c) *Follow-up to implementation of the resolutions adopted by the Commission at its twenty-first session*

(i) *The establishment of an ESCWA consultative committee on scientific and technological development and technological innovation: resolution 225 (XXI)*

34. The representative of the secretariat introduced this item, which is covered in E/ESCWA/22/4 (Part III)/Add.1, and summarized the activities that ESCWA had undertaken pursuant to that resolution. He noted that the first meeting of the Committee had been held in cooperation with ILO. It had issued a number of recommendations, of which the most important concerned the dissemination of new technologies, the formulation of a new and comprehensive vision of technological development in the Arab world, and the adoption of an initiative for using technology to alleviate poverty and unemployment.

35. In addition, ESCWA had undertaken the preparation of a set of studies on improving the use of modern techniques. One such study was on forms of electronic learning.

36. The activities undertaken by ESCWA in this field had focused on three main areas, namely, the provision of training packs and illiteracy eradication programmes, with a view to enabling youth to enter the labour market; providing small and medium-size enterprises with input that would permit them to be competitive and grow; and strengthening research and development in the field of technology.

37. Other activities included the preparation of a study on the use of new technologies to treat water; the establishment of a regional network of technology parks and of an Internet portal that included institutions working in the field of technology; and the formulation of indicators for evaluating the level of technology in Arab countries.

(ii) *Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003: resolution 232 (XXI)*

38. The representative of the secretariat introduced this item, which is covered in E/ESCWA/22/4 (Part III)/Add.2, and explained that the secretariat had added a number of activities to its programme of work for the biennium 2002-2003, in order to keep abreast of developments and make available extrabudgetary resources.

39. The activities were set forth in the annex to E/ESCWA/22/4(Part II). The session was required to consider and adopt those additional activities.

(iii) *The strengthening of cooperation between member countries in the field of shared water resources: resolution 233 (XXI)*

40. The representative of the secretariat introduced this item, which is covered in E/ESCWA/22/4 (Part III)/Add.3, and reviewed the main activities undertaken by ESCWA in the fields of water and energy pursuant to the aforementioned resolution. He also made a visual presentation in which he referred to the establishment of a task force on the optimum use of water resources in the countries of Western Asia; the creation of working groups and bilateral cooperation projects in member countries relating to specific shared water resources; and the conducting of studies and training activities for the building of national capacities and in order to strengthen cooperation between member countries and harmonize working methods in the management of water resources.

(iv) *Rationalization and increased efficiency of energy and the use of renewable sources of energy: resolution 234 (XXI)*

41. The representative of the secretariat introduced this item, which is covered in E/ESCWA/22/4 (Part III)/Add.4, explaining that a number of countries had taken a set of measures with respect to energy-related policies and projects that were intended to increase the efficiency of the production and consumption of energy and develop the uses of renewable energy. He noted that ESCWA had undertaken many activities aimed at providing member countries with the necessary technical information, studying the technical possibilities and options available and evaluating the practical priorities. It had also provided member countries with consultancy services and held several meetings of experts in the fields referred to.

42. Against this background, one of the delegations made a number of remarks on the issue of energy, covering the need to devote the requisite attention to dealing with traditional fuels, including the development and use of cleaner new techniques; the need to study sources of energy that were plentiful in the ESCWA member countries and, in particular, oil and gas, because of the importance of their role in achieving sustainable development; the need to focus on activities relating to the energy sector and its role in sustainable development; the non-observance of obligations specified in international agreements that were not approved by the developing countries, including, for example, the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions; and the recommendation to change the name of the regional renewable energy mechanism to "the regional energy mechanism for sustainable development".

(v) *Adoption of the Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq: resolution 235 (XXI)*

43. The representative of the secretariat introduced this item, which is covered in E/ESCWA/22/4 (Part III)/Add.5, briefly reviewing the stages through which the Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq had passed. He noted that 11 ESCWA member countries had signed the Agreement; four had ratified it and three had deposited instruments of ratification with the Secretary-General. He added that the Committee on Transport had adopted a design for signs on the international roads in the Arab Mashreq, and ESCWA was currently undertaking the task of completing the development of the Integrated Transport System in the Arab Mashreq.

44. With respect to the location in which those countries that had not yet done so could become signatories to the Agreement, and the method of acceding thereto, the representative of the secretariat explained that any country wishing to accede to the Agreement must submit a request to that effect to the Secretary-General. It was possible to accede to the Agreement without having signed it.

(vi) *Rehabilitation of economic sectors in Palestine: resolution 237 (XXI)*

45. The representative of the secretariat introduced this item, which is covered in E/ESCWA/22/4 (Part III)/Add.6, briefly reviewing the progress made in implementing that resolution. He noted that ESCWA had planned a number of activities, including the organization of an Arab international seminar on

54. With respect to organization, he added that the programme amendments had been adopted by the Commission at its fourth special session, in March 2002 and by the relevant authorities at United Nations headquarters in New York. As for human resources, the representative of the secretariat said that a survey had been conducted with a view to determining skills of its staff members, in order to reposition them in the best interests of the priorities of the programme of work.

(g) *Financial status of the Commission's programmes*

55. The representative of the secretariat introduced this item, which is covered in E/ESCWA/22/4 (Part VII)/Rev.1. He made a visual presentation that included detailed information on the financial status of the Commission's programmes.

56. During discussion of the programme budget, a number of points were raised, including the following: the deficit in the ESCWA regular budget and the surplus of allocations for technical cooperation, and ways of dealing with that deficit; the issue of the distribution of expenses by activity; the rectification of information relating to the contribution of Kuwait; the reasons for the low proportion of extrabudgetary resources at ESCWA in comparison with the other regional commissions; the need for details of the allocations process and how it could be evaluated; and the low number of nationals of Gulf Cooperation Council States among the staff at ESCWA.

57. The representative of the secretariat said that the contributions of Kuwait and Lebanon had, in consultation with both countries, been credited to the ESCWA Development Trust Fund after the operation to relocate ESCWA headquarters to Beirut had been concluded. The new method of preparing the budget on the basis of outputs was not so much a financial tool as a mechanism for monitoring programme implementation. The outcomes of those practices would appear in the context of the programme of work for the biennium 2004-2005.

3. *General debate: summary of the issues of which the twenty-second session is seized*
(Agenda item 7)

58. A general debate was held on all the issues of which the Commission was seized at its twenty-second session. This agenda item was included in order to promote dialogue between the countries of the region and the secretariat, with a view to taking into consideration the requests and comments of member countries concerning the Commission's programme of work. During that debate, the following points were raised:

(a) Delegations commended the efforts exerted by ESCWA in many fields over the past two years and, in particular, in the preparations for the Fourth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO), which was held in Doha from 9 to 14 November 2001; the preparation of Arabic language documents and studies for a range of global conferences; the presence at its conferences of a number of eminent personalities, including Mr. Ahmed Zeweil, winner of the 1999 Nobel prize for Chemistry; the according of priority to information and communication technologies; cooperation with a number of organizations and community associations, especially in the field of women; and the ESCWA initiative involving the appointment of coordinating parties in member countries, because of its positive impact on effective coordination. Further commendation was made of the fields of activity selected by ESCWA for this stage, which meet the needs and requests of the region, and of ESCWA's efforts to disseminate the majority of its issuances in the Arabic language;

(b) The strategic partnership between UNFPA and ESCWA in the fields of social policy in general and population research policies in particular; and the cooperation between ESCWA and OHCHR aimed at incorporating human rights measures into all the Commission's activities, as a result of which OHCHR representatives have been appointed in the Arab region;

(c) The need to strengthen the field projects undertaken by ESCWA and to coordinate efforts to make more widely available the benefits of the outcomes of those projects, particularly in dealing with the

socio-economic rehabilitation and development in the occupied Palestinian territories and the organization of missions to those territories, with a view to providing the Palestinian representatives with an opportunity to address the international community on the issue of socio-economic rehabilitation.

46. He added that those missions were intended to establish communication with the various relevant Palestinian parties, including civil society institutions, and to evaluate the capacities of the Palestinian Authority.

47. He explained that such missions had been postponed at the request of the Palestinian Authority because of the situation prevailing in the region and the war against Iraq.

48. He noted that it had been decided to hold a consultative meeting for all the relevant parties before the seminar.

(d) *Follow-up action at regional level to United Nations international conferences*

49. The representative of the secretariat introduced this item, which is covered in E/ESCWA/22/4 (Part IV). He briefly reviewed the activities that ESCWA has undertaken in order to prepare for and follow up United Nations global conferences. He said that ESCWA had participated in the follow-up to 10 conferences in various fields that had addressed all aspects of social development, finance for development, sustainable development and information technology. Activities undertaken by ESCWA in that field included the preparation of brief background papers on the most important issues; the preparation of papers in Arabic because information was sometimes hard to come by in that language; the holding of preparatory conferences for the official and non-official parties; and the building of capacities for negotiation, position coordination, the formulation of specific positions and declaration of principles for submission to global conferences. ESCWA had contributed to the preparations for three conferences in which it had participated actively, namely, the International Conference on Financing for Development, the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the World Summit on the Information Society.

(e) *Reports of the sessions of Commission subcommittees*

50. The representative of the secretariat introduced this item, which is covered in E/ESCWA/22/4 (Part V). He briefly reviewed the reports submitted by the Commission subcommittees. He noted that there were six such intergovernmental subcommittees that met once every two years, with the exception of the Committee on Transport, which met on an annual basis in order to follow up the implementational stages of the Integrated Transport System in the Arab Mashreq. The Committee on the Liberalization of Foreign Trade and Economic Globalization in the Countries of the ESCWA Region had also recommended that it should hold its meetings on an annual rather than a biennial basis. However, resolution 219 (XX) dated 27 May 1999 had provided that the session of that subcommittee should be held biennially.

51. The representative presented a visual review of the recommendations that had appeared in those reports.

(f) *Restructuring of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia*

52. The representative of the secretariat introduced this item, which is covered in E/ESCWA/22/4 (Part VI). He reviewed the details of the restructuring of the ESCWA secretariat, which involved three aspects, namely, those of programming, organization and human and financial resources.

53. With regard to programming, the secretariat referred to the amendments made to the medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005 and the programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003 with a view to consistency with the four priorities identified by ESCWA for its work, namely, water and energy, integrated social policies, globalization and technology.

problems of unemployment, poverty and social marginalization, given that those problems seriously compound threats to stability and security;

(d) The need for ESCWA to pay greater attention to publicizing its programmes and activities in the fields of economic and social development, and to continue its efforts to raise awareness in Arab countries of new developments relating to the WTO Agreements;

(e) The need to evaluate the outcomes of ESCWA activities by adopting an indicator on expenditure/return or outcome and by seeking the views of those who benefit from such activities; and to urge Governments to provide information on the value of those activities, in order to enable ESCWA to develop them and make their benefits more widely available;

(f) ESCWA should be urged to focus its concern on the social, economic and political challenges that have arisen as a consequence of the war against Iraq, and on the necessary studies on crisis economies and reports that help to deal with future changes;

(g) The need to overcome the obstacles that hinder implementation of resolution 237 (XXI) concerning rehabilitation of economic sectors in Palestine and the holding of the intended meeting for the assistance of Palestine, given that the substantial losses sustained by all sectors of the Palestinian economy underline the urgent need for direct support for the Palestinian economy;

(h) The question of the liberalization of services should be given the attention it merits, as should the status of the production and commodities sectors;

(i) The importance of information technology and vital technology was stressed;

(j) Reference was made to the importance of research on issues concerning the WTO Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights Agreement (TRIPs), with especial reference to food and medicines, and the related impact on developing countries, including the resulting rise in prices of those two types of commodity that will increase the burden on such countries;

(k) Reference was made to the possibility of a conflict between the respective remits of the committee on women which the secretariat wishes to establish and the Arab Women's Organization;

(l) The need for the secretariat to address issues relating to the population boom and its impact on development, widespread youth unemployment, the spread of diseases, medicines and HIV/AIDS;

(m) The importance was stressed of the provision of information and statistics that support the countries of the region and enable them to take positions and adopt sound policies, thereby avoiding being subject to the wishes of the developed countries and multinational corporations. This means that intensive and concentrated work must be undertaken with a view to materializing the particularities of the Arab countries and dividing roles between them. National statistical authorities will also have to be strengthened and classifications and measures standardized in order to give the statistics credibility and remove any doubt that may be attached thereto.

59. The secretariat response to those remarks was as follows:

(a) A focus on field projects alone could lead to the duplication of work done by other specialist organizations or to a conflict of competences. The concern of ESCWA in the fields of both research and field activities is with issues of productive use, social cohesion and the eradication of poverty on a wide scale. It also provides consultancy services that fulfil many of the needs and requirements of the countries of the region;

(b) Although a late entrant in this field, ESCWA has been involved in publicizing the WTO Agreements by translating into Arabic some of the documents relating to the subject. It is prepared to exert further efforts in order to assist the Arab countries and prepare them to participate effectively at the Fifth WTO Ministerial Conference, which will be held in Mexico in September 2003;

(c) The secretariat agreed as to the need to follow up the effects on the region of wars and conflicts and to take thought for the future; however, the secretariat must be given a mandate to that effect;

(d) The secretariat requested all the participants to become involved in publicizing ESCWA activities and providing the necessary political and financial support to enable the Commission to serve member countries;

(e) The secretariat noted that the events with which the region is confronted will, on many occasions, require that amendments are made to the programme of work and, consequently, that additional activities are undertaken and financed by extrabudgetary resources;

(f) The work of the United Nations, including that of ESCWA, in the field of women does not conflict with the remit of the other regional organizations: the situation is similar in all the fields with which it is concerned;

(g) ESCWA has been tirelessly involved in the preparations for the global conferences concerning women since the First World Conference on Women was held in Mexico in 1975, up to and including the Fourth World Conference that was held in Beijing in 1995;

(h) The secretariat urged member countries to make use of their regional competencies and particularities and noted some important dimensions thereof;

(i) The secretariat stressed the importance of member countries' delegating high-level participants to its meetings.

4. *Adoption of the Agreement on International Railways in the Arab Mashreq* (Agenda item 8)

60. The representative of the secretariat introduced this item, which is covered in E/ESCWA/22/5. He detailed the six stages through which the draft agreement on international railways in the Arab Mashreq passed. The first was in 1998, while the last concluded with the preparation of the final document of the agreement (E/ESCWA/TRANS/2002/1/Rev.2). The aims of the agreement are to identify axes for the rail network that will link the regions of the Arab Mashreq, strengthen trade and tourism and standardize the technical specifications for railways in the region. The benefits of the agreement include the establishment of one of the cheapest and most efficient methods of transport; the reduction of costs, including those to the environment; the facilitation of multimodal transport; and the strengthening of links between ESCWA member countries and the outside world. The representative of the secretariat gave some details about the rail axes, including their length and current status and noted that 41 per cent of the axes already existed. He concluded his intervention by urging the session to adopt the agreement.

61. During the discussion, the following points were raised:

(a) There is conformity between this agreement and the efforts being exerted in this regard by the League of Arab States, which deals with the entire Arab network in the Mashreq and the Maghreb. In view of the importance of railway lines, it is expected that ESCWA will follow up implementation of this agreement and provide assistance to member countries;

(b) Commendation was made of the role played by ESCWA in preparing the agreement, which is the fruit of regional endeavours in this field.

62. The Agreement on International Railways in the Arab Mashreq was adopted on 14 April 2003, and the representative of the Office of Legal Affairs in New York was urged to open the Agreement for signature on the same day, in which case it would be open for signature in Beirut from 14 to 17 April and would remain open in New York until 31 December 2004.

63. In Arabic alphabetical order, the delegates who signed the Agreement were as follows: His Excellency Mr. Anmar Hmoud, the Ambassador of Jordan to Lebanon; His Excellency Sheikh Humaid bin Ahmad Al-Mualla, Minister of Planning of the United Arab Emirates; His Excellency Sheikh Mohammed bin Khalifa bin Ali Al Khalifa, Deputy Minister of Communications of Bahrain; His Excellency Mr. Makram Ebeid, Minister of Transport of the Syrian Arab Republic; His Excellency Mr. Mitri Abu Aita, Minister of Transport and Communications of Palestine; His Excellency Mr. Najib Mikati, Minister of Public Works and Transport of Lebanon; His Excellency Mr. Mohammed Zeki Abou Amer, Minister of State for Administrative Development of Egypt; and His Excellency Mr. Abdul Rahman Mohammad Tarmoum, Deputy Minister of Planning and Development of Yemen.

5. *Issues of importance for the future of the ESCWA region* (Agenda item 9)

64. The representative of the secretariat introduced this item, which is covered in E/ESCWA/22/6 and comprises two parts.

(a) *The impact of the lack of stability in the Western Asia region on economic and social development*

65. In the context of this item, a round-table discussion was held on the impact of the lack of stability in the Western Asia region, chaired by His Excellency Mr. Khalil Hrawi, Minister of Defence of Lebanon, in which the following main speakers participated: His Excellency Mr. Elias Sabaa, former minister of Lebanon; Ms. Fahmia Sharaf Al-Din, Secretary-General of the Arab Sociological Association in Lebanon; and Mr. Hisham Sharaby, lecturer at universities in the United States of America and at the Lebanese University. Heads of delegation also participated.

66. This discussion considered the impact of the lack of stability in the Western Asia region on economic and social development. The aim was to promote a frank debate on the consequences of the war against Iraq and their effect on economic, social and cultural development, and to consider the positions that should be adopted by Governments and peoples in order to confront the challenges and coordinate with the international community and its forces that were opposed to war.

67. Mr. Khalil Hrawi opened the discussion by referring to the following points:

(a) The wars unleashed by Israel throughout the past 50 years have kept the Arab world from developing and diverted resources from development to military endeavours. The Arab world must therefore confront Israel on the economic and social fronts;

(b) The permanent state of unrest that prevails in the Arab world hinders the activation of regional cooperation and joint Arab activity;

(c) The current situation in Iraq affects every Arab country;

(d) The lack of stability in the Arab region is not a recent development, but has become a characteristic of that region because of the Israeli aggression that has consumed a significant share of the economic resources of the countries of the region;

(e) Once regional agreement has been reached as to a political vision for development and appropriate mechanisms have been established for joint Arab activity, the threat posed by Israel may be

confronted and the positive advantages of the Arab region, which enjoys a shared culture and a common language, may be emphasized;

(f) There is an urgent need for international consideration of the crisis in Iraq; the role of the United Nations must be strengthened and a legitimate Government that may take over the reins of power in that country must be expeditiously formed.

68. Mr. Elias Sabaa, who took the floor next, focused on the following points:

(a) It is likely that the short-term economic consequences of the war will be concentrated on the following main factors: oil prices, investment, the role of the private sector and regional cooperation;

(b) In the medium term, oil prices will tend to fall because the decision to increase production and restrict the price of oil is in the hands of the controlling foreign forces, which will attempt to impose prices that serve their interests. This will result in a fall in oil revenues and, in consequence, a state of economic stagnation and recession in the countries of the region. It is therefore essential that the Arab petroleum producing States be urged to bring all possible pressure to bear on the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) to maintain production quotas and refuse to accept any reduction in the price of oil;

(c) The doubt and uncertainty as to future events in the region will adversely affect opportunities for both domestic and foreign investment, with the exception of certain Government and private investments that are linked to the conditions of the political relationship between the local and foreign forces;

(d) The role of the public sector will regress as a result of the privatization policies that are being widely applied throughout the region. Arab Governments should therefore reflect on the privatization of the remaining public sector institutions and reconsider privatization policies, with a view to balancing the public and private sectors;

(e) It is certain that negative economic conditions at the level of investment, stability and oil revenue will exacerbate the fragmentation, fracturing and recession of economic growth rates throughout the Arab region. Greater efforts must therefore be made to achieve regional integration and strengthen joint Arab action.

69. Mr. Hisham Sharaby made the following points:

(a) The lack of stability has arisen from the failure to build modern states that can effect change and overcome inherited traditional culture based on the "nanny" or paternal system. This has led to the perpetuation of the existing economic, social and education systems that are based on the role of the paternal system;

(b) The drive towards modernization, the overcoming of the paralysis in the Arab political system and addressing the feelings of despair and depression in the peoples of the region are all things that can only be dealt with by restoring to those peoples their ability to work and produce;

(c) There is a need for social reform based on visions and practical methods of dealing with change, with a view to preparing to effect the necessary rapprochement between Governments and social movements and give a support role in the reform process throughout the Arab region to Arab intellectuals and researchers.

70. Ms. Fahmia Sharaf Al-Din focused on the following points in her remarks:

(a) The absence from the region of any value system with regard to equality has made a significant contribution to the lack of stability. Of particular significance are values relating to such vital questions as popular participation, integration and rationality as a systematic working tool;

(b) The lack of stability resulting from the absence of any value system of equality is accompanied by the inadequacy of pressure groups in Arab countries and the low standards of living of large parts of society caused by poverty and marginalization. Those matters call for a complete revision of social and economic policy and for the formulation of a different political vision of participation and equality. Means must be found of responding to challenges and meeting the demands of reform at all levels;

(c) The geographical location of the region and the international competition for its resources have contributed to the lack of stability. It is therefore more necessary than ever before to support the United Nations and the League of Arab States at every level, in order to maintain their role, which is necessary under such conditions of extreme decline and in this state of anticipation and the consequent lack of stability which makes it essential to find solutions rather than merely researching consequences;

(d) The formulation of a regional concept, to which the various actors in the region contribute, could make a significant contribution to finding bases for coordination and cooperation to be implemented at international level.

71. During the discussion that took place under this item, the following main points were raised:

(a) There is a need to institute reform by concentrating on the liberation of the individual and of thought;

(b) There is a need to make a connection between the various parties of Arab society and its organizations and to activate the role of civil society and its connection with decision makers. Attempts must be made to establish democracy as the basis for the connection between Arab countries and to implant the idea that the individual should accept the decision of the group rather than vice versa;

(c) The psychological impact of paternalism on generations;

(d) A focus on the role of the United Nations in restoring security and stability and establishing international legitimacy and on the role of other regional organizations, including, for example, the League of Arab States, in their capacity as an intellectual forum and platform for dialogue;

(e) A vision must be formulated with the human being as the central focus of development;

(f) The lack of stability in the Arab region must be considered from the international viewpoint, given that it is partially explained by the struggles that are taking place with a view to gaining control over the wealth of the Middle East.

(b) *The strengthening of Arab regional cooperation*

72. The representative of the secretariat introduced this item, which is covered in E/ESCWA/22/6/Add.1. He noted that at ESCWA, regional cooperation has taken two main forms. The first is the harmonization of methods of applying sectoral policies in various fields and the second is the strengthening of Arab regional cooperation in a direct and practical manner by implementing specific projects. He affirmed the priority of Arab regional cooperation through the formulation of methodologies and the establishment of institutions to apply those methodologies and raise public awareness.

73. Some of the successes that had been achieved in that area included the adoption of the Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq; the establishment of a consultative body on regional cooperation; the establishment of the Globalization and Regional Integration Division; the creation of a subprogramme concerned with regional integration and globalization; the issuance of a publication entitled *Annual Review of Developments in Globalization and Regional Integration in the Countries of the ESCWA Region*; and the holding of a workshop on Arab regional integration.

74. During the discussion of this item, the following points were raised:

(a) The importance of strengthening Arab regional cooperation by applying specific projects and of achieving increased coordination with the League of Arab States in all fields and, in particular, with respect to the Pan-Arab Free Trade Area;

(b) The need to clarify for member countries the rules of origin and to create an appropriate dispute settlement mechanism and publicize its existence;

(c) Given the sensitivity of the issue of the freedom of movement of individuals between the countries of the region, guidance could be sought from the relevant European model;

(d) Reference was made to the fact that Saudi Arabia was one of the first countries to demonstrate an interest in activating joint Arab action and to sign the Pan-Arab Free Trade Area Agreement. Further reference was made to the Prince Abdulla initiative for joint Arab action which will be put before the forthcoming Arab Summit.

6. *Draft programme of work and priorities for the biennium 2004-2005*
(Agenda item 10)

75. The representative of the secretariat introduced this item, which is covered in E/ESCWA/22/7, and made the following points in a visual presentation:

(a) The draft programme of work and priorities for the biennium 2004-2005 complements the current programme of work for the biennium 2002-2003;

(b) The aim of the programme of work and priorities is to promote social and economic development in the region and provide guidance on the sustainable use of the region's natural resources by facilitating Arab regional integration;

(c) A further aim is to confront the major challenges in the region, which include the lack of comprehensive, integrated and sustainable social policies that take into consideration the economic, social and environmental aspects of development; the impact of economic changes on the social aspect of development when considering the economic situation that is unsustainable in view of increasing population growth; the challenges of globalization; the liberalization of trade in conformity with WTO regulations; follow-up to the requirements of the technological revolution; and action to bridge the digital divide;

(d) The programme of work is based on the strategic methodology that was devised during the ESCWA restructuring process in the biennium 2002-2003, the aim of which is to highlight and strengthen existing elements and add new factors to the revised programme structure;

(e) ESCWA continues to optimize its work by concentrating on four main fields, namely, water and energy, social policy, globalization and technology.

76. During the discussion of this item, the following points were raised:

(a) The secretariat was urged to ensure that the programme of work included activities relating to the development of human resources and of youth and women in particular;

(b) Stress was placed on the need to address the issue of the increasing population growth in the region; programmes should be included that address the issues of illiteracy, electronic data interchange and electronic commerce;

(c) Emphasis was given to the need for ESCWA to continue to undertake activities relating to capacity-building, consultancy services and technical cooperation services, and to strengthen and extend the benefits of such activities;

(d) Questions were raised regarding the employment process and the increase of geographical representation, clarification was sought as to whether financial allocations were made for each member country and the needs of the least-developed countries were stressed;

(e) It was important that any conflict should be avoided between regional particularities and international standards, in case that should impact on certain issues, the most important being human rights and women;

(f) A call was made for the human rights standards set in international instruments and agreements to be incorporated into ESCWA activities and, in particular, the "rights-based approach" with respect to the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights and the right to development;

(g) A study should be made of the alternatives for adjusting economic policies in the ESCWA member countries, with a view to standardizing both their development goals and the undertakings that were assumed upon or in the course of accession to WTO.

77. The representative of the secretariat responded to those comments with the following explanations:

(a) Youth-related issues would continue to be addressed in ESCWA programmes; activities related to population continued to be implemented. Reference was made to the workshop that will be held in Cairo in 2004, which will focus on the importance of population policies and the fact that they complement development policies; and to cooperation with UNFPA and the Population Division in New York;

(b) No allocations by country were made in the budget; inasmuch as the programme of work addressed the least developed ESCWA member countries;

(c) Emphasis was placed on the fact that information on vacant posts at ESCWA was available to all on the United Nations Internet site, and applications for such posts must be made through that site.

7. *The role of ESCWA in coordinating regional activities of the United Nations system* (Agenda item 11)

78. The representative of the secretariat introduced this item, which is covered in E/ESCWA/22/8, and made the following points in a visual presentation:

(a) The United Nations Regional Coordination Group, which comprises representatives of all the United Nations organizations working in the ESCWA region, is the appropriate forum and mechanism for strengthening regional cooperation between those organizations;

(b) That Group held its sixth meeting on 28 June 2002 at ESCWA headquarters in Beirut. The meeting was attended by 19 regional organizations. A further meeting is expected to be held on 29 and 30 May 2003 in preparation for the convening of an important meeting in October 2003 that will be attended by Ms. Louise Fréchette, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations;

(c) At their last meeting, the members of the Group agreed on the need to highlight United Nations achievements in the region in the economic and social fields and on the need to identify a regional vision and strategy in which regional priorities would be specified and on which the work of United Nations organizations could focus;

(d) One of the most important issues on which the Group meeting had focused was the Group's Internet site, which had been created by ESCWA within its own web site with a view to being one mechanism for presenting the set of regional activities undertaken by the members of the Group;

(e) Reference was made to the fact that the Group is currently considering the establishment of a training centre for the settlement of armed conflicts and promotion of the culture of peace.

79. During the discussion on this item, the following points were raised:

(a) Clarification was sought as to the existence of a mechanism for coordination between the five United Nations regional commissions;

(b) A call was made for increased regional cooperation;

(c) The need was stressed for coordination with respect to the overlapping remits of the organizations.

80. The representative of the secretariat responded to those points with the following explanations:

(a) Cooperation would definitely continue between ESCWA and NGOs and had already resulted in the signature of a number of agreements;

(b) Communication between ESCWA and the other regional commissions was effected through the Regional Commissions/New York Office and the holding of periodic meetings.

8. *Designating the sessions of the Commission as the forum for a biennial pledging conference: resolution 236 (XXI)*
(Agenda item 12)

81. The representative of the secretariat introduced this item, which is covered in E/ESCWA/22/9/Rev.1 and urged ESCWA member countries to announce their contributions to Commission resources. He stressed the importance of extrabudgetary resources in extending the scope of ESCWA activities to include a larger number of countries and permit other Arab countries to benefit from its services; in responding to such unexpected developments as conflicts; and in supporting programme activities.

82. He compared the ratio of voluntary contributions to the regular budget in the five United Nations regional commissions and demonstrated that ESCWA received the lowest level of such contributions, amounting to no more than 4.7 per cent of the regular budget. That proportion is much smaller than in the other commissions: in the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, contributions represent some 40 per cent of the regular budget.

83. With respect to contributions, the representative of the secretariat clarified the following points:

(a) For a number of years the United Nations budget has suffered from negative growth and as a result, it has been forced to have recourse to other means, of which the most significant are contributions;

(b) The contributions made to ESCWA in the past were used to relocate the organization from Jordan to Lebanon;

(c) Contributions to the Commission were of more than quantitative significance, because they demonstrated concern for the organization and its programmes of work and gave a good impression;

(d) Contributions gave the secretariat greater flexibility and allowed it to implement more field projects in response to the wishes of certain member countries;

(e) Through this item, the secretariat sought to urge officials in member countries to provide ESCWA with similar support to that received by the other regional commissions and guarantee its continuation. The secretariat would send to member countries for their consideration proposals for projects for which funding was sought.

9. *Time and venue of the twenty-third session of the Commission*
(Agenda item 13)

84. It was decided to hold the twenty-third session of the Commission in Beirut in April 2005.

10. *Other business*
(Agenda item 14)

85. No proposals were received under this agenda item.

11. *Adoption of the report of the Commission on its twenty-second session*
(Agenda item 15)

86. The Commission adopted the draft report on its twenty-second session with the proviso that the amendments that had been agreed upon should be incorporated therein.

III. ISSUES TO BE BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

87. At its sixth plenary meeting, held on 17 April 2003, the Commission adopted a number of resolutions and decided to submit them to the Economic and Social Council for its attention. Their texts are as follows:

241 (XXII). THE IMPACT OF THE LACK OF STABILITY IN THE ARAB REGION ON ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,

Noting with deep concern the impact of the lack of stability in the Arab region on the economic, social and environmental situation and on the development process in general,

Recalling that the instability in the region has continued over successive decades as a result of continuous wars and, in particular, the Israeli occupation of Arab territories; and the economic and social impact of that sustained situation,

Noting also that the restructuring process undergone by Commission programmes of work has added to the responsibilities of ESCWA that of promoting post-conflict development and reconstruction, as stated in the revised medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005,

Further recalling the practical approach adopted with respect to the relevant activities and, specifically, the Commission's contribution to the implementation of the multidisciplinary project in southern Lebanon and, in cooperation with the Palestinian Authority, its initiation of measures to assist Palestine to rehabilitate its economic sectors,

1. *Requests* the Secretariat to study the impact of war on economic and social development and the environment in Iraq, ensuring that its activities in that field are coordinated with those of other United Nations bodies and the relevant regional organizations, and to provide assistance in this respect in the framework of the purposes and principles of the United Nations;

2. *Also requests* the secretariat to identify the activities that should be undertaken by ESCWA as part of the post-war reconstruction and rehabilitation process, and to incorporate such activities into its programme of work and specializations;

3. *Further requests* the secretariat to establish a mechanism for monitoring the effects of current and future crises, with a view to identifying and analysing the extent of the impact on economic and social development in the region of such events, and to assist countries in dealing with such crises;

4. *Requests* the Executive Secretary to submit a report on the matter to the Commission at its twenty-third session.

6th plenary meeting
17 April 2003

242 (XXII). THE AMENDMENTS MADE TO THE REVISED PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR THE BIENNIUM 2002-2003

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,

Cognizant of the progress made during 2002 in the implementation of the revised programme of work for the biennium 2002-2003,

Cognizant also of the amendments made to the programme of work as set forth in the annex to the report of the Executive Secretary on the activities of the Commission,[6]

Satisfied with the progress made, notwithstanding the ESCWA programme restructuring process,

Persuaded that it was necessary to introduce some amendments to those programmes in order to maintain their flexibility,

1. *Approves* the amendments made to the revised programme of work for the biennium 2002-2003;

2. *Requests* the secretariat to follow up implementation of the programme of work and, if necessary, to take responsibility for activities that address any changes that may take place in the ESCWA region;

3. *Further requests* the Executive Secretary to provide member countries with information on any further modifications to the programme of work for the biennium 2002-2003 and include that information in the progress report that is submitted to member countries in years when there is no session.

6th plenary meeting
17 April 2003

243 (XXII). ADOPTION OF THE AGREEMENT ON INTERNATIONAL RAILWAYS IN THE ARAB MASHREQ

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,

Conscious of the importance of facilitating transport and trade in order to achieve Arab regional integration and of working to eliminate the barriers to the movement of interregional trade,

Recalling the Declaration on the adoption and development of an Integrated Transport System in the Arab Mashreq, that was made by the ESCWA Committee on Transport at its first session, of which cognizance was taken in resolution 212 (XX) dated 27 May 1999, on the basis that such a system was the appropriate mechanism for integrating the various systems of transport and providing links between the countries of the region and neighbouring countries,

Recalling also that the third session of the Committee on Transport, held from 5 to 7 March 2002, adopted the draft agreement on international railways in the Arab Mashreq, and that the fourth session of that Committee, held from 14 to 16 January 2003, adopted the revised text of the agreement,

Cognizant of the stages through which the agreement has passed in the course of preparation, before appearing in its current form, which takes into consideration the observations of member countries,[7]

1. *Adopts* the Agreement on International Railways in the Arab Mashreq;

2. *Urges* member countries to make the necessary arrangements for signing and ratifying the Agreement, in order that it may enter into force as soon as possible.

6th plenary meeting
17 April 2003

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[6] E/ESCWA/22/4, p. 21.

[7] The *Agreement on International Railways in the Arab Mashreq* (E/ESCWA/TRANS/2002/1/Rev.2), which was adopted and opened for signature on 14 April 2003.

244 (XXII). COOPERATION BETWEEN ESCWA MEMBER COUNTRIES WITH RESPECT TO SHARED WATER RESOURCES AND THE ARAB NETWORK FOR THE INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,

Referring to paragraphs 1-18 of the revised medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005, the revised programme of work for the biennium 2002-2003 in the field of water and the proposed programme of work for the biennium 2004-2005,

Referring also to the recommendations made by the Committee on Water Resources at its fifth session[8] held from 30 October to 1 November 2002 with respect to the importance of activating cooperation projects between member countries relating to shared water resources and the building of member country capacities with respect to the integrated management of water resources; and the importance of strengthening cooperation and integration in that field between training centres and institutes by establishing an Arab network for the integrated management of water resources,

Appreciative of the positive response of the member countries involved in the bilateral shared water resource cooperation projects overseen by the secretariat,

1. *Urges* member countries to complete the procedures necessary for official approval of memorandums of understanding relating to bilateral shared water resource cooperation projects, and to provide support for the technical task forces that are carrying out such projects;

2. *Adopts* the recommendation made by the Committee on Water Resources at its fifth session calling for the establishment of an Arab network for the integrated management of water resources and the activation of its role, in coordination with the ESCWA secretariat;

3. *Also urges* specialist water training and research centres and institutes in Arab countries to become members of that network;

4. *Further urges* member countries, international organizations, donors and funding institutions to provide the funding necessary to activate that network;

5. *Requests* the Executive Secretary to continue to promote projects and activities relating to shared water resources and the Arab network for the integrated management of water resources and to follow up evaluation of implementation, with a view to supporting national and regional capacity-building in the field of the integrated management of water resources.

6th plenary meeting
17 April 2003

245 (XXII). THE ESCWA INITIATIVE FOR ACTIVATING THE ROLE OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION IN ACHIEVING THE MILLENNIUM GOALS

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,

Aware of the importance of science, technology and technological innovation in achieving the Millennium Goals and, in particular, the alleviation of unemployment and poverty,

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[8] *Report of the Committee on Water Resources on its Fifth Session* (E/ESCWA/ENR/2002/23).

Noting the positive impact of science, technology and technological innovation, as part of the knowledge-based global economy, on the transfer to an information society and on the creation of new employment opportunities and the alleviation of poverty,

Considering it necessary to promote research and development activities in the ESCWA member countries and for those countries to coordinate in the fields to which they accord priority,

Aware of the opportunities offered by the new technologies for establishing systems for education, vocational training and the alleviation of poverty and for providing poor and marginalized societies with valuable chances for employment in new areas,

1. *Adopts* the recommendations made by the Forum on Technology, Employment and Poverty Alleviation in the Arab Countries that was held in Beirut on 16 and 17 July 2002 and by the first meeting of the ESCWA Consultative Committee on Scientific and Technological Development and Technological Innovation, which was held in Beirut on 18 July 2002,[9] with respect, in particular, to the following:

(a) The formulation of a new vision for the future of science, technology and technological innovation, and of national policies and strategies for implementation related thereto;

(b) The establishment of a new institutional framework in ESCWA member countries, with the focus on centres of excellence, technology parks, technology incubators and service and productive communities, all supported by high technology;

(c) The strengthening and coordination of research and development endeavours and increasing of the amounts allocated thereto in ESCWA member countries;

(d) The development of the national education and vocational training systems, with a view to eradicating traditional and technological illiteracy;

2. *Requests* the secretariat to prepare a study on the position of the countries of the region with respect to vital technology in the field of agriculture, food and medicines production; formulate priorities for the region with respect to those fields; and put forward proposals for executive initiatives to assist the countries of the region in confronting the demands arising from international trends that affect the future of the sector;

3. *Further requests* the secretariat to follow up implementation of the above-mentioned recommendations by means of a regional initiative that aims to achieve specific goals and tangible results, within an appropriate time-frame;

4. *Requests* the Executive Secretary to submit a report on the matter to the Commission at its twenty-third session.

6th plenary meeting
17 April 2003

246 (XXII). THE FORMULATION OF A REGIONAL PLAN OF ACTION FOR AN INFORMATION SOCIETY

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,

Cognizant of United Nations General Assembly resolution 56/183 dated 21 December 2001, concerning the World Summit on the Information Society, to be held in two phases, the first in Geneva in December 2003 and the second in Tunis in 2005,

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[9] *Report of the Forum on Technology, Employment and Poverty Alleviation in the Arab Countries* (E/ESCWA/TECH/2002/2) and *Report of the First Meeting of the Consultative Committee on Scientific and Technological* Development and Technological Innovation (E/ESCWA/TECH/2002/1).

Aware of the great importance of information and communication technologies as effective tools for accelerating economic and social development and establishing the information society,

Guided by the outcomes of the preparatory conferences for the Summit and, in particular, the draft declaration of principles and plan of action that will be submitted for adoption to the World Summit in December 2003,

Commending the Western Asia Preparatory Conference for the World Summit on the Information Society, which was held in Beirut from 4 to 6 February 2003, and the Declaration of Principles issued by that Conference,

Taking into consideration the role that ESCWA expects to play in the consultations undertaken with the regional and international organizations working in Arab countries with a view to formulating a single regional plan of action for the Arab region, given that the countries of the region are culturally and historically related,

1. *Calls upon* the secretariat to propose a regional plan of action for building the information society that respects the particularities and linguistic and cultural priorities of the region, and to coordinate in that regard with the League of Arab States;

2. *Requests* the secretariat to make the necessary amendments to the programme of work for the biennium 2002-2003, in conformity with the outcomes of the preparatory conferences and the Western Asia Preparatory Conference for the World Summit on the Information Society;

3. *Also requests* the secretariat to review the proposed programme of work and priorities for the biennium 2004-2005 in order to ensure that it contains activities relating to that regional plan;

4. *Further requests* the secretariat to continue the effective participation in the preparations for the World Summit on the Information Society and, accordingly, to make the requisite amendments to the programme of work for the biennium 2002-2003.

6th plenary meeting
17 April 2003

247 (XXII). THE DEVELOPMENT OF STATISTICAL WORK IN THE ESCWA REGION

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,

Cognizant of the need to provide statistics prepared in a scientific manner in order to assist countries in formulating the economic and social policies necessary for the national development process,

Noting the need of the countries of the region to develop national statistical bodies and update mechanisms for and methods of preparing and analysing their economic and social data and indicators,

1. *Requests* the secretariat to assist the countries of the region in adopting and applying the scientific standards employed internationally for amassing, analysing and disseminating statistical data and indicators, with a view to enabling those countries to formulate economic and social policies and monitor progress towards the achievement of national development objectives;

2. *Also requests* the secretariat to encourage the countries of the region and provide them with the necessary technical support to enable them to become parties to the Special Data Dissemination Standard applied by the International Monetary Fund;

3. *Urges* member countries to participate in the project for the development of national gender statistics programmes.

6th plenary meeting
17 April 2003

248 (XXII). THE PARTICIPATION OF ESCWA MEMBER COUNTRIES IN THE INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON PROGRAMME

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,

Cognizant of the importance of the seventh session of the International Comparison Programme developed for the period 2003-2005, and of its benefit to member countries with respect to the use of actual economic standards when making economic comparisons between various countries and regions of the world and when concluding trade and investment-related bilateral and multilateral agreements with other member and non-member countries,

Cognizant also of the overwhelming importance of this Programme when measuring the various levels of poverty and standards of living and for making sound economic comparisons that facilitate the taking of prudent decisions,

Considering that this Programme has a positive impact on raising the level of statistical and economic capacities in member countries,

Appreciative of the response of member countries who have expressed their desire to participate in this important Programme and to appoint representatives for purposes of coordination,

1. *Expresses its satisfaction* that ESCWA has joined the Programme in its capacity as the party responsible for its implementation in the Western Asia region;

2. *Urges* all member countries who have not yet indicated a desire to take part in the Programme to join it forthwith, support it, cooperate with those responsible for it, and, when possible, provide it with financial support;

3. *Recommends* that the secretariat includes activities related to the International Comparison Programme in its programmes of work.

6th plenary meeting
17 April 2003

249 (XXII). STRENGTHENING CONSULTANCY SERVICES AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION ACTIVITIES IN THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,

Cognizant of the important part played by the consultancy services and technical cooperation provided by the Commission to member countries in strengthening capacities in those countries,

Cognizant also of the fact that the secretariat's field activities complement its research and analysis activities and help to meet the development needs of member countries,

Affirming that consultancy services and technical cooperation activities are one of the main methods adopted by the Commission in order to assist member countries in meeting specific needs,

1. *Commends* the positive role played by the secretariat with respect to consultancy services and technical cooperation at national and regional levels;

2. *Calls upon* the secretariat to strengthen consultancy services and technical cooperation activities, given that they are of such benefit to member countries;

3. *Requests* the secretariat to expend greater efforts to effect coordination between its research and analysis activities and, on the one hand, its technical cooperation activities and, on the other, its consultancy services;

4. *Urges* member countries and local, regional and international donor bodies to increase their financial support for the Commission's consultancy services and technical cooperation activities.

6th plenary meeting
17 April 2003

250 (XXII). ADOPTION OF THE FINAL REPORTS OF THE SUBSIDIARY BODIES OF THE COMMISSION

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,

Having considered the recommendations set forth in the final reports of the subsidiary bodies of the Commission,[10]

Recognizing the importance of taking action to implement those recommendations, in order to enable ESCWA to undertake its responsibilities in the special areas pertaining to its subsidiary bodies,

1. *Adopts* the recommendations contained in those reports;

2. *Requests* member countries to cooperate with ESCWA in formulating and activating measures that will promote the implementation thereof.

6th plenary meeting
17 April 2003

251 (XXII). PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 2004-2005

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,

Recalling resolution 238 (S-IV) dated 11 March 2002 concerning the revised medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005, and the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005,

Taking into consideration the fact that the proposed programme budget may be amended when discussed by the relevant committees and the United Nations General Assembly,

1. *Approves* the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005;

2. *Requests* the secretariat to distribute the programme budget to member countries once it has been endorsed by the General Assembly;

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[10] The reports of the subsidiary bodies are contained in E/ESCWA/ENR/2002/22; E/ESCWA/ENR/2002/23; E/ESCWA/TRANS/2002/2; E/ESCWA/2003/IG.1/6; E/ESCWA/SD/IG.1/9; E/ESCWA/STAT/2002/3; and E/ESCWA/GRID/2003/IG.1/7.

3. *Further requests* the Executive Secretary to submit a report to the Commission at its twenty-third session on the progress that has been achieved in implementing the programme of work and to inform it of any amendments that have been made thereto.

6th plenary meeting
17 April 2003

252 (XXII). REHABILITATION AND ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION IN PALESTINE

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,

Recalling resolution 237 (XXI) dated 11 May 2001 concerning rehabilitation of economic sectors in Palestine,

Recalling also the grievous conditions in Palestine under Israeli occupation and the resulting difficulties that hinder implementation of the aforementioned resolution,

1. *Affirms* the need urgently and at the earliest possible opportunity to convene an Arab-international forum on rehabilitation and reconstruction as a step towards the establishment of an independent Palestinian State;

2. *Requests* the secretariat to exert efforts to increase Arab participation in reconstruction and rehabilitation and link such participation to the relevant international programmes;

3. *Affirms also* the role of the Palestinian Authority and the institutions of Palestinian civil society in formulating the practical plan for reconstruction and rehabilitation, given that it is the body with true interest in that regard and represents all the economic and social sectors and, in particular, the transport and communications, trade, industry, agriculture, education, health, tourism and other damaged sectors, and has responsibility for alleviating the desperate situation of the refugee camps under occupation;

4. *Further affirms* the need for the secretariat to assist the Palestinian National Authority by delegating experts to evaluate the losses suffered in economic and social sectors and providing assistance in finding a relevant mechanism, through international organizations and institutions, for compensating such losses in the various sectors, in order to enable them to recover and undertake their duties in the future, thereby contributing to the development process;

5. *Requests* the Executive Secretary to follow up implementation of this resolution, and to submit a report on progress achieved to the Commission at its twenty-third session.

6th plenary meeting
17 April 2003

253 (XXII). THE INCREASE OF DONATIONS TO THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,

Recalling its resolution 236 (XXI) dated 11 May 2001 concerning the designation of the sessions of the Commission as the forum for a biennial pledging conference,

Affirming the importance of extrabudgetary resources in enabling the secretariat to expand the range of its activities and deal with unforeseen developments in the ESCWA region,

1. *Thanks* the member countries that have contributed to the Trust Fund for ESCWA Regional Activities;[11]

2. *Also thanks* the United Nations, international and regional organizations and the funds, individuals and other parties for their help in supporting Commission activities with extrabudgetary resources;

3. *Urges* member countries to increase their donations to match the voluntary funds made available to the other United Nations regional Commissions.

6th plenary meeting
17 April 2003

[11] To see names and contributions of donors, see E/ESCWA/22/4(Part VII)/Rev.1.

Annex I

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

A. ESCWA MEMBERS

Bahrain

H.E. Mr. Majeed bin Mohsen Al Alawi
Minister of Labour and Social Affairs
Manama

H.E. Sheikh Mohammed bin Khalifa bin Ali Al Khalifa
Deputy Minister of Communications
Manama

H.E. Mr. Waheed Mubarak Sayyar
Ambassador of Bahrain to Syria
Damascus

H.E. Sheikha Hind bint Salman Al Khalifa
Under-Secretary for Social Affairs
Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
Manama

Mr. Sabah Salem Al Dosari
Manager, Office of the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs
Manama

Mr. Radhi Mehdi Al Sammak
Senior Specialist, International Relations Section
Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
Manama

Egypt

H.E. Mr. Mohammad Zeki Abou Amer
Minister of State for Administrative Development
Cairo

H.E. Mr. Hussein Derar
Ambassador of Egypt to Lebanon
Beirut

Mr. Mohamed Talaat Khattab Salem
Chief Under-Secretary
Ministry of Transport
Cairo

Mr. Majdi Sweilem Radi
Director of International Economic Affairs
Ministry for Foreign Affairs
Cairo

Ms. Amira Abdel-Rahim Ali
Diplomatic Attaché
Egyptian Embassy in Lebanon
Beirut

Jordan

H.E. Mr. Bassem Ibrahim Awadallah
Minister of Planning
Amman

H.E. Mr. Anmar Abdel Halim Alnmer Al Hmoud
Ambassador of Jordan to Lebanon
Beirut

Mr. Tayseer Radhwan Al-Samadi
Director, Policies and Studies Directorate
Ministry of Planning
Amman

Kuwait

Ms. Sarah A. Al-Duwaisan
Under-Secretary
Ministry of Planning
Kuwait

Mr. Hamad Monawer Habib Al Musailem
Assistant Under-Secretary
Planning and Follow-up Sector
Ministry of Planning
Kuwait

Mr. Sami Abdul Aziz Al Hamad
First Secretary
Embassy of Kuwait in Lebanon
Beirut

Mr. Bader Abdul-Rahman Al-Rifai
Under-Secretary Office Department Manager
Ministry of Planning
Kuwait

Mr. Jaber Abbas Qabazard
External Coordination Supervisor
Ministry of Planning
Kuwait

Lebanon

H.E. Mr. Mahmoud Hammoud
Minister of Foreign and Emigrants Affairs
Beirut

H.E. Mr. Najib Mikati
Minister of Transport
Beirut

H.E. Mr. Khalil Al-Hrawi
Minister of Defence
Beirut

H.E. Mr. Antoine Chedid
Director of the International Organizations
Ministry of Foreign and Emigrant Affairs
Beirut

Mr. Hassan Mohamed Hashim
General Director of Investment
Ministry of Energy and Water
Beirut

Mr. Karim Yazbek
Vice President
Council for Development and Reconstruction
Beirut

Ms. Vivian Ghbeira
Director, Cooperation and Industrial Relations Department
Ministry of Industry
Beirut

Ms. Rafif Kobeissi Berro
Director, External Trade Department
Ministry of Economy and Trade
Beirut

Ms. Najwa Yaacoub
Statistician
Central Administration of Statistics
Beirut

Mr. Samih Nayef Wehbe
Expert, Ministry of Environment
Beirut

Ms. Samar Malek Azar
International Laws Specialist
Ministry of Environment
Beirut

Ms. Nancy Khoury
Public Relations and External Affairs
Ministry of Environment
Beirut

Oman

H.E. Mr. Mohammed bin Nasser Al-Khusaibi
Secretary-General
Ministry of National Economy
Muscat

H.E. Mr. Amer bin Hamad Al-Hijri
Ambassador of Oman to Lebanon
Beirut

Mr. Saleh bin Abdulah Al-Farsi
Director General, Information and Publication Center
Ministry of National Economy
Muscat

Mr. Mohammed bin Abdullah Al-Mahrouki
Director General, Private Sector Affairs
Ministry of National Economy
Muscat

Mr. Mohammed bin Yahya Al-Shabibi
Director of Economic Organizations Department
Ministry of National Economy
Muscat

Mr. Abdul Hakim bin Ahmed bin Abdul-Majid Al-Ansari
Chief, Public Relations Section
Muscat

Mr. Ahmad bin Barakat Al Ibrahim
Chargé d'Affaires
Embassy of Oman in Lebanon
Beirut

Palestine

H.E. Mr. Mitri Abu Aita
Minister of Transport
Ministry of Transport
Ramallah

Mr. Mohammad Amin Jaradat
Director General
Ministry of Transport
Ramallah

Qatar

H.E. Mr. Abdullah bin Mohammad Al-Khater
Ambassador of Qatar to Lebanon
Beirut

Mr. Hamad Salem Al Khalifa
Chief, Road Transport Section
Customs and Ports General Authority
Doha

Mr. Hasan Ali Al-Nuaimy
Chief, International Affairs Section
Customs and Ports General Authority
Doha

Mr. Mohammad Abdullah Ibrahim Al-Maadhid
Chief, Proficiency Certification and Personnel Affairs
Customs and Ports General Authority
Doha

Mr. Ahmad bin Abdullah Al-Kawari
Second Secretary
Embassy of Qatar in Lebanon
Beirut

Saudi Arabia

H.E. Mr. Fouad Sadek Moufti
Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to Lebanon
Beirut

Mr. Abdul Rahman Al-Khayyat
Consultant
Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Lebanon
Beirut

Mr. Mohammad Hussein Seraj
First Secretary, Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Lebanon
Beirut

Mr. Faisal Mohammad Al-Zawawi
First Secretary, Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Lebanon
Beirut

Syrian Arab Republic

H.E. Mr. Makram Ebeid
Minister of Transport

Mr. Mousa Al Shaar
Minister Assistant
Ministry of Transport
Damascus

Mr. Akil Ismail
Director of Railway Transport
Ministry of Transport
Damascus

Mr. Mohammad Bassam Al-Sebaie
Assistant Chief
State Planning Authority
Damascus

Mr. Ibrahim Ali
Director, Central Bureau of Statistics
Damascus

United Arab Emirates

H.E. Sheikh Humaid bin Ahmad al-Mualla
Minister of Planning
Abu Dhabi

Mr. Ahmed Al Sayed M. Al Hashemi
Assistant Under-Secretary, Planning and Statistical Department
Ministry of Planning
Abu Dhabi

Mr. Mohammed A. Al Marzooqi
Director, Land Affairs Department
Ministry of Communications
Abu Dhabi

Mr. Rashed A. Al Neaimi
Director, Central Statistical Department
Ministry of Planning
Abu Dhabi

Mr. Mohammed Saleh Shelwah
Planning Department Director
Ministry of Planning
Abu Dhabi

Mr. Saeed Salem Al Kuthairy
Chief, Permits Section
Neutralization and Immigration Department
Ministry of Interior
Abu Dhabi

United Arab Emirates (*continued*)

Mr. Ebraheem Mohammed Rasul Khoori
Senior Road Engineer
Works Department
Abu Dhabi

Mr. Abdullah Abdul Aziz Al Manaie
Researcher
Ministry of Planning
Abu Dhabi

Mr. Rashid Ali Al Marzouqi
Deputy Harbour Master
Seaport Authority, Mena Zayed
Abu Dhabi

Mr. Mohammed Saleh Jasem Samhan Al Nuaimi
Mezyed Customs Manager
Abu Dhabi Customs Department
Abu Dhabi

Mr. Sami Abdulla Al Hashmi
Assistant Director, Roads Department
Dubai Municipality
Dubai

Mr. Ahmad Abdulla Bin Lahej
Senior Manager, Facilitation and Customs Procedures
Port, Customs and Free Zone Corporation
Dubai

Yemen

H. E. Mr. Abdul Rahman Mohammad Tarmoum
Deputy Minister of Planning and Development
Sanaa

Mr. Abdel-Hakim Al-Aghbari
Project Director
Rural Access Project, Central Management Office
Ministry of Public Works and Urban Development
Sanaa

Mr. Gamal Yaqoob Abdul Mageed
General Administration for Regional and International Organizations
Ministry of Planning and Development
Sanaa

B. States Members of the United Nations not members of ESCWA

Libyan Arab Jamahiriya

Mr. Hussein Mohammad Al-Sharif
Chargé d'Affaires
Member of Libyan Arab Brotherhood Office
Beirut

Morocco

Mr. Jamal Al-Alaoui Abdalla
Minister-Adviser
Moroccan Embassy in Lebanon
Beirut

Sudan

H.E. Mr. Sayed Ahmad Al-Bakheit
Ambassador of Sudan to Lebanon
Beirut

C. Experts

Mr. Hisham Sharabi
Honorary Professor at Georgetown University
President of the Palestinian Centre in Washington

Mr. Elias Saba
Economist
Former Deputy and Former Minister
Beirut

Ms. Fahmia Milhem Charaf-Eddine
Secretary-General
Arab Society for Sociology
Beirut

D. UNITED NATIONS SECRETARIAT

Secretary-General Representative

Mr. Staffan de Mistura
Personal Representative of the Secretary-General for Southern Lebanon
Beirut

Regional Commissions/New York Office

Ms. Sulafa Al-Bassam
Chief, New York Office of the Regional Commissions
New York

Legal Council Office/United Nations Headquarters

Mr. Bradford C. Smith
Legal Officer/Treaty Section
New York

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

Mr. Alexandre Schmidt
Coordinator
Beirut

Ms. Renee Sabagh
National Expert
Beirut

E. UNITED NATIONS PROGRAMMES AND AGENCIES

United Nations Children's Fund

Mr. Ekrem Birerdinc
UNICEF Representative
Beirut

Mr. Jan van Manen
Regional Programme Planning Officer
Middle East and North Africa
Amman

United Nations Development Programme

Mr. Christian De Clercq
United Nations Coordination Senior Advisor
Beirut

United Nations Population Fund

Mr. Abdul Muniem Abu-Nuwar
Director of the UNFPA Country-Technical Services Team for the Arab States
Amman

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Mr. Amin Medani
Regional Representative for the Arab Region
Beirut

Ms. Afaf Abbas
Regional Representative for the ESCWA Region
Beirut

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Mr. Abdel Karim Ghoul
Assistant Regional Representative
Beirut

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

Mr. Alfredo Miccio
Director of UNRWA Affairs
Beirut

United Nations Environment Programme

Mr. Habib N. El-Habr
Deputy Regional Director
Regional Office for West Asia (ROWA)
Manama

United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS

Dr. Hala Abou Taleb
Intercountry Programme Adviser
Intercountry Team for the Middle East and North Africa
Cairo

F. UNITED NATIONS SPECIALIZED AGENCIES

International Labour Organization

Mr. Taleb Rifai
Regional Director
Regional Office for Arab States
Beirut

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Mr. Azzedine Z. Azzabi
FAO Representative a.i.
Beirut

United Nations Industrial Development Organization

Mr. Giuseppe Papuli
UNIDO Representative
Beirut

G. INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS AND RELATED BODIES

League of Arab States

H.E. Mr. Abdrahman Sehebani
Deputy Secretary-General for Economic Affairs
Cairo

Mr. Muatasem R. Suleiman
Director of Finance and Trade and Investment Department
Cairo

Ms. Mawaheb Khallaf
Head of the Basic Services Sectors Department
Cairo

Saudi Fund for Development

Mr. Saud bin Abdul Rahman Abdulhadi
Economic Organization Specialist
Riyadh

Arab Industrial Development and Mining Organization

Talaat bin Dafer
Director General
Rabat

Mr. Hamed El Maamoun Alameddine
Director, Center of Standardization
Rabat

Arab Planning Institute

Mr. Issa Mohammad Al-Ghazali
General Manager
Kuwait

Council of Ministers of Labour and Social Affairs in Gulf Cooperation Council States

Mr. Othman bin Abdullah Al-Towaijari
General Manager
Manama

Arab Organization for Agricultural Development

Mr. Salem Al-Lawzi
General Manager
Khartoum

Mr. Al-Sadek Al-Fadhel Azrak
Director, International Cooperation Department
Khartoum

Organization of the Islamic Conference

Mr. Albaraa Farouk Tarabzouni
Representative of the Secretary-General
Economic Affairs Department
Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

H. GOVERNMENTAL AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas

Mr. Anwar Agha
Beirut Executive Manager
Beirut

Union of Arab Banks

Mr. Fouad Mohamed Shaker Sayed Ahmed
Secretary-General
Beirut

Mr. Joseph Tarabeeh
President
Beirut

General Union of Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture for Arab Countries

Ms. Noha Hawwa Nehme
Responsible of Trade Issues
Beirut

National Committee of Lebanese Women's Affairs

Ms. Randa Assi Berri
Vice-President
Beirut

Ms. Jumana Abu Al-Rous Mufrej
Manager
Beirut

Ms. Najwa Ramadan
Executive Office Member
Beirut

Ms. Ghada Hamdan Hodeib
Executive Office Member
Beirut

Ms. Izza Sharara Beidoun
Chief, Research and Documentation Committee
Beirut

Child and Mother Society

Sheikhah Lolwa bint Mohammad Al Khalifa
President
Manama

General Union of Palestinian Women

Ms. Salwa Hilmi Rashid Abu-Khadra
Secretary-General
Ramallah, Palestine

Ms. Nihaya Mustapha Mohammad Taqla
In-Charge-of Internal Relations
Ramallah, Palestine

Ms. Amne Kamel Suleiman
President, Lebanon Branch
Saida, Lebanon

Birzeit University

Mr. Nader Izzat Said
Director, Development Studies Programme
Palestine

Kuwaiti Federation of Women's Associations

Ms. Fatima Othman Al-Bakr
Chief, Information Committee
Kuwait

Arab Women Organization of Jordan

Ms. Emily Issa Naffa
Administrative Committee Member
Amman

Imam Al-Sadr Foundation

Ms. Rabab Al-Sadr Sharaf-Eddine
President
Beirut

Mr. Mohammed Abdul Amir Bassam
Research and Studies Office
Tyre, Lebanon

Lebanese Welfare Association for the Handicapped

Mr. Boutros Hobeika
Public Relations Officer
Beirut

Lebanese Researchers Association

Ms. Fadia Hteit
General Coordinator
Beirut

Union of Northern Associations for Sustainable Development

Mr. Mazen Abboud
President
Beirut

Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World

Ms. Mona Chemali Khalaf
Director
Beirut

Lebanese Association for Popular Volunteers Groups

Mr. Kamel Mohanna
President
Beirut

Zayed Center for Coordination and Follow-up

Mr. Abdel Wahab Al Redwan
Cultural Adviser
Abu Dhabi

National Center for Development and Rehabilitation

Mr. Khaled Tawfiq al-Muhtar
General Director
Beirut

Lebanese Women Council

Ms. Ikbal Mrad Doughan
President
Beirut

Hariri Foundation

Ms. Mirna Fouad Sabbagh
Programmes Director
Saida, Lebanon

Ms. Wafica Ezzeddine Skafi
Translator
Saida, Lebanon

Lebanese National Commission

Ms. Salwa Saniora Baassiri
Secretary-General
Beirut

Annex II

LIST OF DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED TO THE COMMISSION AT ITS TWENTY-SECOND SESSION

Symbol	Item	Title
E/ESCWA/22/1	3	Agenda
E/ESCWA/22/1/Add.1	3	Annotated agenda
E/ESCWA/22/2	4	Organization of work
E/ESCWA/22/3	5	Invitation to States Members of the United Nations and/or of the specialized agencies not members of the Commission to participate in the capacity of observer in the twenty-second session of the Commission
E/ESCWA/22/4	6	Report of the Executive Secretary on the activities of the Commission
E/ESCWA/22/4(Part I)	6 (a)	The role of ESCWA in supporting the mandate of the United Nations
E/ESCWA/22/4(Part II)	6 (b)	Progress made during 2002 in the implementation of the programme of work for the biennium 2002-2003: Regular programme activities
E/ESCWA/22/4(Part II)/Add.1	6 (b-i)	Progress made during 2002 in the implementation of the programme of work for the biennium 2002-2003: Coordination and cooperation between ESCWA and United Nations agencies, international organizations and civil society institutions
E/ESCWA/22/4 (Part II)/Add.2	6 (b-ii)	Progress made during 2002 in the implementation of the programme of work for the biennium 2002-2003: Technical cooperation activities
E/ESCWA/22/4(Part III)	6 (c)	Follow-up to implementation of the resolutions adopted by the Commission at its twenty-first session
E/ESCWA/22/4(Part III)/Add.1	6 (c-i)	The establishment of an ESCWA consultative committee on scientific and technological development and technological innovation: resolution 225 (XXI)
E/ESCWA/22/4(Part III)/Add.2	6 (c-ii)	Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003: resolution 232 (XXI)
E/ESCWA/22/4(Part III)/Add.3	6 (c-iii)	The strengthening of cooperation between member countries in the field of shared water resources: resolution 233 (XXI)
E/ESCWA/22/4(Part III)/Add.4	6 (c-iv)	Rationalization and increased efficiency of energy and the use of renewable sources of energy: resolution 234 (XXI)

Symbol	Item	Title
E/ESCWA/22/4(Part III)/Add.5	6 (c-v)	Adoption of the Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq: resolution 235 (XXI)
E/ESCWA/22/4(Part III)/Add.6	6 (c-vi)	Rehabilitation of economic sectors in Palestine: resolution 237 (XXI)
E/ESCWA/22/4(Part IV)	6 (d)	Follow-up action at regional level to United Nations international conferences
E/ESCWA/22/4(Part V)	6 (e)	Reports of the sessions of Commission subcommittees
E/ESCWA/22/4(Part VI)	6 (f)	Restructuring of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
E/ESCWA/22/4(Part VII)/Rev.1	6 (g)	Financial status of the Commission's programmes
E/ESCWA/22/5	8	Adoption of the Agreement on International Railways in the Arab Mashreq
E/ESCWA/22/6	9	Issues of importance for the future of the ESCWA region
E/ESCWA/22/6/Add.1	9 (b)	The strengthening of Arab regional cooperation
E/ESCWA/22/7	10	Draft programme of work and priorities for the biennium 2004-2005
E/ESCWA/22/8	11	The role of ESCWA in coordinating regional activities of the United Nations system
E/ESCWA/22/9/Rev.1	12	Designating the sessions of the Commission as the forum for a biennial pledging conference: resolution 236 (XXI)
E/ESCWA/22/10/Rev.1	15	Report of the Commission on its twenty-second session
E/ESCWA/22/INF.1		List of twenty-second session documents
E/ESCWA/22/INF.2		List of publications and documents issued by the Commission since its twenty-first session
E/ESCWA/22/INF.3		Information for participants